The Crown Series

EUNICE

OR

AS YE WOULD

Clara Elizabeth Ward

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BY

CLARA ELIZABETH WARD

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Dedication.

TO

MOTHER AND FATHER,

THE ONE HERE,

THE OTHER IN THE LAND OF LIGHT BEYOND,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

EUNICE.

CHAPTER I.

A CLIMAX.

How many a heart that bleeds in vain,
How many a spirit racked with pain
Cries out—and bitter in its moan—
"If I had known! If I had known!"
—*M. A. Kidder.*

"COME, help me move this trunk, will you?" The voice was high-keyed, and excitedly irritable.

The woman addressed turned through the open doorway toward the speaker and said, with a subdued, though husky accent:

"Why, Celia! you won't need that—just for a few days, you know." The words were accompanied by a mute appeal in the coarse features of this middle-aged woman, who showed traces of hard suffering in her face.

She was a wiry little person, thin and somewhat ungainly. A coarse, black serge gown hung loosely upon her stooping figure. Her head, with its covering of smooth, black hair plainly combed, was unusually large, and very long from brow to chin,

while the latter protruded over her narrow chest. The large, straight mouth and prominent black eyes now looked repulsive in their pitiful wonder.

With a nervous gesture she drew nearer to her daughter, but the action evidently irritated that young woman still more, for she replied:

"Yes, I shall need it. I shall run the whole gamut. Don't you suppose I know what I wish to do? I shall visit I guess, as much as I like."

"But you are coming home again on Friday?"

"Yes," was the answer, in a derisive tone; "back to home and mother!"

There was no response to these cruel words; but with the submissive mien of an inferior the weary mother helped to drag the heavy trunk into her daughter's bedroom, and there spread out upon the bed were the party gowns, into which had been stitched so many long-cherished hopes, mingled with pride, and alas! of late, with bitter tears. There lay one, which she had made only a short while before, a soft, flowing silk. How willingly she had remained up late at night, although so weary that the needle dodged and shirked its task until the patient hand, aroused by thoughts of Celia's vexation should the new dress not be finished for the party, punished itself by requiring double speed! How the fabrics seemed to taunt her from the bed, like creatures that had turned traitor to their maker! They were replete with her hopes and sorrows, and thrilled her with vague apprehensions.

"Why, Celia! you are not going to take these?" she asked, bewildered.

"Indeed, I am! Now do go to bed; you will kill me yet. Oh, this stupid place! It has nearly driven me wild." The girl seemed, indeed, to verify the last statement. Her hair, loosened for the night, was streaming down her back in dull, yellow profusion. Her tall figure swayed restlessly to and fro as she moved about the room, intent upon some task, while the pale, set features, and gleaming, gray eyes bespoke a temperament strained to the utmost limit of its ordinary endurance.

A spoiled child do you think, or an inconsiderate mother upon whom the morning sunbeams will shine in reconciling benediction, ushering in content? Ah! that every anxious, wakeful one, feverish with night-watching, might sing a matin song of hope.

Many and many a time the faithful clock downstairs sounded out its cheery notes upon the night stillness, as if to comfort the sleepless mother, who listened so intently to the swift movements on the other side of the partition. When they finally ceased, she fell asleep from sheer exhaustion, and awoke only when aroused by her younger daughter, Vina, who was clinging to her and whispering:

"Oh, mamma, get up quick! She's up, and she kissed me good-bye when I woke up, and a man's here taking out her trunk, and she's got her things all on, and is going right off. Oh, dear! I'm afraid she's going to do something awful, mamma." The poor child's imagination had been fed by the forebodings of the mother, who had poured out her fears to her little daughter, as to an adviser.

Dazed and terrified she sprang out of bed,

dressed, snatched up a shawl, flew into the kitchen, and through the sitting-room. The front door was open; a carriage was standing before the house, and some one was helping Celia to enter it. The early morning mists blurred her vision. Soon all was indistinct, like the night's horrors through which she had just passed. She shaded her eyes, and called out in her broken voice: "Celia! Celia! won't you even say good-bye?" Then she sank down, moaning in her grief, which shook her frame piteously, hopelessly.

The worst might happen now. The evil portended was coming true. Why were sorrows heaped upon her head? Why had she slept? "But perhaps," she thought, starting up, "perhaps I can stop her even now." No, she felt that was impossible. "If I could only have a good-bye word or look," she moaned.

Close by her side knelt little Vina, with her arms about her neck. When the violent sobbing ceased, she whispered a word of cheer.

"Perhaps, mamma, it is not what you think; maybe she will come home again."

And there was another Comforter, who never leaveth nor forsaketh even the lowest of those who call upon him, and the woman's eyes were dried.

After absently partaking of the frugal meal, which was interrupted by alternate fits of weeping and complaint, Mrs. Parkes said:

"Get my bonnet, Vinie." Then looking at her, she added, "Poor child! You go to bed till I come back, for you look almost sick." Kissing her, she said between her sobs: "Oh, if you should be

taken from me! I am going to the city. Maybe it will not do any good, but I cannot rest till I go. I will tell her all about it and maybe I will get word."

Just before starting, she added: "Probably I will be back by night. If I am not, you just go over to Mrs. Doty's." She passed out through the dilapidated wicket gate and hurried down the dusty road toward Thrumville station, leaving behind her Vina, and her unpretentious home.

If trouble ever seemed to be the portion of some people more than others in this world, it seemed so now to this woman. She could not remember when life had not been hard. In early childhood, her own mother having died, an unsympathetic stepmother had been chosen by the none too loving father. She was the oldest of several children in a family of three half-brothers, rough, sturdy boys, who looked down upon a girl, and had especial contempt for one so ugly and unattractive as was their half-sister. From this uncongenial life on the home farm she was sent out to work as "hired girl"; but being unusually bright, and having made the best of her scanty opportunities, she secured a district school instead, where she taught during the fall and spring. This was her greatest good fortune in those days, for it was a remarkable thing that a school should be given to a girl. She did not, however, depend upon teaching entirely; as she liked to sew, she made dresses for the country women during the winter season. At seventeen she married a traveling agent. It was "love at first sight" on her part. He had loved at first sight many times

before, but never so truly. Her bright eyes and quick tongue had a fascination for him, notwithstanding her unattractive features. But he proved fickle-hearted, and would often leave her for months without warning, and what was worse, without support. When he returned, which he did two or three times, she received him gladly, for she loved him still. At last he went away and she afterward saw in a newspaper that he was dead. He had fallen from a wharf into the river. There was no doubt it was he, as was learned from his papers. A widow she was then, with two children and no money, but she retained her ambition. "Let her show her smartness now," her half-brothers said, when she appealed to them.

It was the first time she had asked a favor since starting out for herself. But though they clung to the old prejudice, they were not altogether heartless. They each sent her a little money. It was enough to start her in business; and she opened a shop, when Vina was yet a baby and Celia a pale little girl.

Once she acknowledged to herself, "I almost wish Celia was a boy." But Celia grew so much like her father in looks and manners that all the wife's fondness, united with the mother-love, was bestowed upon the child. All her little whims were indulged, and her sayings were stored up and proudly rehearsed to neighborly ears.

"Of course she is smart; she is just like her father, I tell them," Mrs. Parkes once remarked to a friend. "I tell them she is he to perfection. He wasn't quite perfection, to be sure, but Celia—

well, you know the children are all I have, and I ought to be proud; now don't you think so?"

But it was hard, sewing from early morning until late, and then barely succeeding in keeping ghostly want at a fixed distance, as it were, from her door. Both girls were growing pretty and bright. Celia already knew the ways of the city when they had been there scarcely a fortnight, and stood at the head of her class in the public school. But Celia had to be clothed.

"It makes no difference what I wear," Mrs. Parkes had said, as she continued the above conversation, "if Celia can only dress respectably. Besides, she is real tasty, and I feel as if she ought to have nice things when she thinks so much of them. Not that Celia is vain; no, she is too smart and sensible for that—although most girls would be, in her place, I am sure."

"Mamma," Celia would often say, "why don't you make me a new dress? I saw a lovely bargain today, and I should like to have it."

Then the fond mother, after demurring a good deal, would save money and contrive to give Celia the "surprise" which the child knew would come sooner or later; for the wishes of her children were law in Mrs. Parkes' eyes. But Vina, demure little kitten, seldom asked for a new doll or plaything. The old ones seemed sufficient for her and to claim all her affection.

As these busy years now flashed across her memory, they seemed to this woman to be full of sweetness and comfort in contrast with the experiences of the past few months.

"What have I done or left undone that this trouble must come upon me," she thought. "True, I have not lived as well as I might, perhaps. My example has not been of the best, although I went to church when I could, and tried to live right before the dear child. Didn't I do the best I knew how? I was cross sometimes, I know; yes, I was cross; but I was so tired—oh! it does seem as if I did the best I knew." Then why was it that she must drain the bitter dregs, just when it seemed that her cup was overflowing with blessing? This thought seemed more unbearable than ever now, as she remembered how her father had regretted his treatment of his only daughter, and left her a little home in the country. The angry brothers had contested the will to no avail. Her reward had come at last, she thought. After giving her daughter the best schooling the city afforded, by dint of much labor and careful economy they were to be comfortable at last.

"I had planned to be so happy together, we three," she sobbed. But then had come the worst misfortune of all. It had stolen in upon them unawares, and had brought them to the scene with which our story opened.

The recollection of these things was surging through this woman's brain as she walked the five miles to the station and talked, somewhat incoherently, with the station agent.

"Have you seen anything of a young girl with a big trunk? Did she take the cars to the city? Was she all alone? or maybe——"

"I've seen a young girl—in fact two, with

trunks, but I did not ask where they were going," the station agent interrupted her, sarcastically; but seeing her pitiful look of anxiety, he softened the gruffness of his tone a little, and asked: "Madame, are you in trouble? Has your daughter gone insane?"

"Oh, sir! insane? insane?" she returned, bewildered; "perhaps she is insane, perhaps she is. Yet! Oh, my child! my girl!"

She broke down entirely, and the really kind-hearted agent came from behind the railing which divided the private office from the public waiting room in this small station, and led her to a bench, which was the only seat this place afforded. Fortunately, or unfortunately, there were no other occupants; so this unusual tenderness on the part of the agent would not give surprise to any curious spectator.

"I haven't seen any such girl, madame," he said, kindly; "I'm sorry, but don't take on so. Maybe you'll find her at home when you get there. Nobody's been to the station to-day except two 'drummers.'"

His answer did not seem to satisfy her, and she felt in her pocket for money to buy her ticket. As she boarded the train, people looked wonderingly at the haggard features of the nervous little woman in faded black. But the many eyes soon turned again to their respective novels or papers, or closed listlessly, or gazed lazily out of the window. Only one, a woman, steadily watched our friend with sympathetic interest until she arrived at her station and was lost in the crowd.

"Is Miss Eunice in?" asked a trembling voice, as a maid opened the door of a fine residence on one of the most aristocratic avenues in the city of Rochester.

"No; Miss Eunice went out an hour ago, and Mrs. Olway won't be back till late, for she's gone to a mission meetin'," returned the maid, looking inquiringly at the shabbily dressed woman on the steps.

"I will wait till she comes, because I must see her," declared the stranger, stepping inside with the confidence of one who had been well received there before.

"Step this way then, mum," said the girl, leading her back into a little room, which was apparently a private reading or waiting room.

A piano was going in an adjoining apartment, on which some one was practising. At the farther end of the long, broad hall children's voices were heard in play. A door or two closed with little noise. Then there were no other sounds but the clear tones of the piano, mingling with the happy, childish voices.

Mrs. Parkes breathed more freely. She was sure to see Miss Eunice, and she knew that would bring some comfort. She did not mind waiting now. Had she not always waited?

Meanwhile Eunice Olway, or Miss Eunice, as she was sometimes called, was absent on a mission of love. It was very often, indeed, during these autumn months, that she might have been found on such an errand. A sick woman with a baby was just then the recipient of her attention, and on her

way home, a little newsboy, a new member of her Sunday-school class was to be called upon. So it was quite late in the afternoon before she entered a homeward-bound street car.

She made a picture well worth studying as she sat in the car, smiling now and then when she recognized a friend. Her dark blue dress set off to good advantage her fine figure; but what her companions usually noticed was neither her dress nor her figure, but her face, which had an indescribable sweetness about it. There was no remarkable beauty of complexion, but those who stopped to analyze its charm said that it consisted in the wonderful harmony between the trustful, childlike eyes, and the sympathetic, womanly mouth. Her whole face spoke a universal language, the language of the soul. It was one of those faces which inspire to nobler thoughts; which make the hard, old man think of his boyhood home, and the prayer at his mother's knee.

Do you wonder then that a soul burdened with sorrow should come to Eunice Olway for words of comfort? Do you wonder that those who yearned for something better than they had ever known, should look with gladness at her face? Do you wonder that our trouble-stricken friend in black should be waiting where we left her last? Blessed are those in this world to whom the needy come with confidence and gladness! They have a warrant of true discipleship; for did not the needy, suffering-ones come unto the very Christ?

Celia Parkes was always wise beyond her years. At

the head of her class in school, she easily discovered that it was natural for her to be the brightest of her companions. Her mother even had not anticipated such glowing accounts of her daughter's ability as certain imprudent teachers occasionally poured into her ears, in the presence of the apparently indifferent paragon herself. So it cannot be wondered at that Celia should have grown up with the certainty of her own genius ever in mind; and it soon became natural for her during those leisure hours which the easy prosecution of her school duties afforded her, to weave with her busy mind a web of future happiness, when all things would bend to her will; when the stubborn difficulties of a life of poverty would all melt away under her own magic touch. To say that she was happy in the present would be untrue. Though her home was as comfortable as many of her schoolmates possessed, yet she looked with quiet envy upon those who were reared in luxury. She loved her mother and sister in a certain way; but her ideal future was always apart from these home associations. Yet she could help her mother, and did in some ways, for as Mrs. Parkes sewed all day, Celia had to prepare the meals, and it was something to have a daughter who could adapt herself to circumstances.

In this way she had grown up, mastering her studies, and yawning with the *ennui* of it. Thus far, though life in the true sense had been all on the surface, intellectually she had dipped into philosophy, science, and religion. Yes, at seventeen she felt that she had penetrated the depths of all these, and had discovered their shallowness. The

full joys of living, and the sense of an unfathomable Goodness within and around her, which to Eunice Olway were the most real of her experiences, Celia never even conjectured.

"What a happy girl you are, Miss Eunice! Goodness fairly overflows from you, and it is no trouble for you to be lovely," Celia had once said. "It is just your nature; you could not help it if you tried." And she persuaded herself that it was of course superficial, and would wear away in time. "Eunice is not a genius," she continued to herself. "The common people seem contented enough; not that Miss Eunice belongs to them, but she is not a genius. Yet she is very good company for a genius. In fact, I would like to have Eunice somewhere near me always, for I never knew any one like her—always the same, and so ready to do anything for one. As to being like her myself, it is impossible; besides, I don't wish to be."

Such reflections as these were frequently in Celia's mind when she had come to know Eunice as a very agreeable school companion. Miss Olway, on her part, had tried hard to understand genius. After a while she even pitied Celia; but the pang of sorrow was accompanied by an inward smile of womanly experience at Celia's open belief in her powers.

"She will find, poor girl, that the world is not quite within her compass," Eunice thought. "I hope she may find it out soon, and may it make her less self-confident. But she is so young; yes, and so bright. It makes me tremble sometimes. Would that I might show her the danger. God help me to

help her," she prayed, "for she needs help, though she little thinks so."

The friendship between these two was a peculiar, though not a very intimate one; but it was strong and unbroken, until on one side it was forgotten.

There came a time when Celia discovered the means by which to dispel *ennui*. It began gradually, but when the full revelation came to her, it took possession of her as nothing had ever done before. It became a passion, hidden at first to unobservant eyes, and the only object worth living for was its gratification. Then came separation between her and her mother.

As Celia hurried away from home that early morning without a look or word of farewell, she was still under the spell of her secret passion. So strangely had her genius developed that her poor mother felt it to be the great curse of their lives.

It was this that was building up a wall of partition between mother and daughter. Genius, yes, their evil genius, was thrusting the final dart of pain, and had run away, making mockery of her sufferings.

But no premonitions of danger entered the mind of Celia, as she was on her way out into the great wide world, where she should be free—away from the past that galled her, and the protection and fondness of her mother, which she did not like. What did she care for the past or the future? The present would soon be all.

And so we must let her go, while we pray with the mother that some time she may be found groping her way back again to the love she had spurned.

CHAPTER II.

HOME IN COUNTRY AND CITY.

Around each pure domestic shrine
Bright flowers of Eden bloom and twine,
Our hearths are altars all.—*Keble.*

If thou dost catch at times some gleam of the divineness of charity, of the glory of sacrifice, of the grandeur of faith, of the sky-piercing power of prayer, . . . believe in them, for they are the mountain principles and altar-piles of life. —*Starr King.*

IT was late the next morning before Mrs. Parkes left the Olway mansion. But she went home with a lightened weight of care. There was even a glimmer of hope now and then upon her resigned features, as certain thoughts flashed across her mind.

"Poor little Vinie is waiting for me," she thought. "I must hurry back to Vinie." No, their home was not entirely forsaken. She had Vina, and they, thank God, had Eunice Olway—Eunice and God. Somehow Mrs. Parkes always felt that God must be very like Miss Olway; but she had never felt this so much as now. Mrs. Parkes had one of those natures that can trust God with a childlike faith and deem him like a human sympathizer. Perhaps she needed some trouble to keep her constantly aware of the Great Comforter. But she also needed a human friend. Had she been entirely friendless

probably she would have utterly despaired. It occurred to her now in a vague, mysterious way, that the loving Father had been watching over her all the time, although she had been as one benumbed and insensible to his watchcare. She grasped the truth only feebly as yet, but it stole over her as a feeling when she thought of what Eunice had said: "God will care for you. God is caring for you. Only just try to lean on him more and more. If you have been to blame, remember your own tender love for Celia; and then think that your love is nothing compared to his great love. He forgives you the moment you turn to him. If we would only rest in this love, that passes that of father and mother and all other love as well." These words of Eunice still sounded in her ears like the strains of a sweet Christmas carol floating out over the hope-tinted dawn of a new morning.

Eunice Olway herself had never been so conscious of the heavenly presence and divine love as when speaking and doing what her heart prompted for the comfort of this poor woman. She afterward tried to describe this exaltation to her mother when they were together one evening in their private sitting-room.

To her this particular room had a character of its own which would cease to exist if ever dissociated from the mother who presided there. The warmly tinted walls, not too high; the deeper shade of the curtains, draped apart in soft folds; the still richer color of the carpet—all this harmonious blending of tints bespoke an artistic eye as well as the peace-loving heart of the mother-spirit that reigned there. In

autumn and winter the effect was that of genial warmth, with the fireplace aglow in the corner and the large lamp beaming brightly from the centre-table. But the soul of the picture was gone unless the mother was sitting there, sewing leisurely while her happy eyes rested upon her daughter, who was sitting on a stool at her feet and reading aloud. Sometimes Eunice was sewing, while her mother read or talked in a low, melodious voice, as her hand might rest on her daughter's brow. With pleasing variations, such was the picture that would have often greeted the eye of an observer from the open doorway which communicated with the hall. Thus it was that Garton, the son, sometimes found them, but not so frequently as of yore, for now he had both wife and children to make a pretty group-picture in another part of the house.

Garton was Mrs. Olway's only son, as Eunice was her only daughter. He was the elder, and resembled his father, who was now dead, as much as Eunice resembled her mother. Garton's marriage had been a trial to them, because the bride, although very pleasant and exceedingly pretty, was too worldly in their eyes. She was rich, aristocratic, and fashionable, and fond of her husband. She moreover liked her new relatives and willingly acceded to Garton's wish to live in the same house with his mother and sister. The young wife had her fashionable friends and parties however, while the mother-in-law still lived simply and was faithful as ever to her Christian duties. But although there was no visible difference, it soon grew to seem natural that the evenings of the two families should be spent apart. So it

happened that Garton, who often felt the same old longing of his boyhood days to lay his head in his mother's lap and feel the caresses of her love, sometimes escaped from the pleasant familiar talk of his own drawing-room and appeared in the open doorway, as has been said. He entered a few days after Mrs. Parkes' visit, as Eunice was saying:

"Oh, mamma, I cannot tell you what a revelation came to me while I was talking with her. Do you know, I think I can understand Paul's vision better now?"

She had been again rehearsing the sad story in which both were so interested.

"How, dear?" Mrs. Olway returned, with suppressed emotion, as she laid her hand upon the white forehead resting on her lap.

"I believe I have kicked against the goads long enough," she answered, raising her head and lifting her liquid, gray eyes to the brown ones above her.

"Well?" caressing the uplifted chin.

"When I was talking to her, it all grew clear to me how I had only half seen the truth before; and oh! mother dear, I did not try to see it before, for fear the sight would be more than I could bear. Do not think that I am speaking strangely. I was blind, but now I see, and life can never be the same any more!" She buried her face in her mother's lap and gave vent to tears of mingled joy and sorrow.

After a few moments of silence, she lifted her face again and continued: "I see myself now, mamma. But I have been so blind before. I would not see it, but now it is glorious," she whispered, as

she covered her mother's hand with kisses, and her eyes beamed with a new radiance. "He wants me too, to be a light to the Gentiles. He wants me just to shine for him, for he said I have given you this wonderful light, child, just for you to let it shine on others; don't you see?"

Her mother caught something of her exaltation, and replied: "I think so, dear, but you have always shone. You have given everything to him always, you know."

"No, mamma. This is different; I have not given all, as he gives to me. I did not give it to them. Celia had almost everything else, but I had this. I did not give it as he expected me to do. Nobody has given it to them; and now they have so little that will be in accord with his love." She hid her face again in her mother's lap.

"My child!" the mother whispered. Then after a moment, she added, as if to herself: "We have freely received. Have we as freely given?"

"Oh, mother!" Eunice exclaimed, joyfully. "You too, see now. It all came to me like a flash when that poor woman was sobbing and saying how she had hoped God would care for them; she had *hoped* Celia would believe in God; she *knew* Celia believed in me. Couldn't I someway be like God to Celia, because I was almost already, she said, for Celia always spoke of me in that way. Oh, mamma dear, life is all new to me now. I never dreamed it could be so glorious!"

"Nor so serious—so responsible too, dear."

Presently Eunice murmured, in a faint whisper: "Mamma dear, what if he should take me away

from you and put me right in with those blind ones; what if he should ask me to pour out all my life at the feet of these poor, naked ones, whom Christ died to save?"

Mrs. Olway hesitated, and a quiver passed over her face; but she returned, calmly: "Why do you ask, dear?"

"Mamma, I must go! I must go; some time—but how can I leave you?" The big tears began to steal down her cheeks again.

"He will not take you from me yet. I could not let you go," the mother said, fervently. "Yet," she added, looking searchingly at Eunice's face, "if it were his will, would I dare say no?"

Then the girl exclaimed: "No, no; it could not be. I simply could not go. Yet he left all!" Presently she looked up with a new thought trembling on her lips. "I do not need to go—yet,—perhaps never. There are those right near, you know."

"Yes," the mother whispered.

They gave each other a long, expressive look, then bowed their heads thoughtfully in silent prayer.

It was winter. Fully two months had passed since the confidential talk between Eunice and her mother. A blustering day and a picturesque night. The full moon, shining with benign countenance between the dark, scudding clouds, while the winds roared through the naked branches, allowed a sudden gloom to be cast over the snow-covered earth; this was followed by as sudden a radiance, softly bril-

liant, which threw into relief the marble whiteness of the snowy surface, in contrast with the dark outline of tree-trunks and branches, against the ever-varying sky.

"Do come to bed, Vinie; you will take your death of cold standing by that window at this time of night. The wind blows frightfully. Vinie, you will freeze, dear. Come."

"Yes, in a minute, mamma; but you ought to look out once. The old year's having such a time of it, as if he was afraid nobody would care about his dying unless he did it himself. But the moon's as nice and quiet—I believe the moon's taking care of the baby New Year."

"What an imagination you have, child; but I do not like——"

"Oh, here I am, mamma!" exclaimed the child, darting into bed, and cuddling down close to her mother.

"Child, how your teeth chatter; and you are shivering. Now, Vinie, what made you?"

"'Sh!" answered the child, putting her small hand over the reproving mouth. "Let us go to sleep. I didn't suppose you would wake up, and I awfully wanted to look out, because I had been dreaming."

"Well, well; go to sleep, if you can, then."

Toward morning the wind went down and the weather moderated somewhat. When Vina arose there was a gentle snow storm outside. She thought it looked as if a huge basket of fresh down-feathers was being playfully emptied by some mischievous brownies of the upper regions. The thought pleased

her, for she smiled. "Why shouldn't the brownies frolic with the baby New Year!" she murmured.

"Mamma has breakfast most ready, probably. I hear her walking around on the kitchen floor," she continued, as she hurriedly dressed. Then running to the door, she called: "Wish you a happy New Year, mamma!"

"Oh, Vinie! You dear child!" returned the mother, pausing in her work. "Well, I thought it never could be happy any more, when Celia——" (she was interrupted by a hug and a kiss) "but since I know she is alive, and I have you——" The tears began to fall.

"Now, mamma; crying on the New Year's Day! Don't you remember what Miss Eunice said in that letter?"

"Yes; that is a great comfort to me. No; I won't cry any more to-day," she declared, wiping her eyes, and laughing a little, at which change Vina skipped about the room and clapped her slender hands.

"Hurry and fix your hair now, because breakfast is almost ready, and Mrs. Doty will be coming before long for Jennie's cloak. It is all done, and real pretty, isn't it? She said Jennie would want it to go sleigh-riding to-day. I wish she would take you riding with her. She might."

"Maybe she's going with a man, mamma. James Blake took her home from church one night, because I saw him."

"Perhaps so; but James Blake is too nice for her, in my opinion—but, dear me, it isn't my business. Anyway, James is a nice boy. Eunice thought he

would be such a help in the Sunday-school if she came."

"Oh, I hope she'll come, I hope she'll come," repeated Vina, in her gentle sing-song.

The breakfast dishes were hardly arranged in the pan ready to be washed when there came a rap at the door, and a woman's voice announced, "It's me."

"Come in, Mrs. Doty."

"Wish you a happy New Year," chimed in Vina, before the door was fairly closed again.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mrs. Doty; "have you just got through breakfast?" letting herself down carefully upon a chair. (Mrs. Doty weighed a hundred and eighty pounds and was short.) Then she gave vent to a hearty chuckle. "I didn't expect to see you so chirp-like here this morning. I am right down glad to see you picking up. There is nothing like a cheerful disposition, I tell Pete. Some folks would joke if they knew they would be struck by lightning the next minute—not as I mean that there are many jokes here, you know."

"No, Mrs. Doty, I guess there are not. Life is not much of a joke for us. I was so sorrowful this morning," Mrs. Parkes said, wincing a little; "but we are keeping up."

"Of course, I know you have an awful hard time of it, and I said just now what I did not intend to; but it is just my way. Pete says, 'Ma, if you wanted to say a fellow was handsome, you would say he was uncommon ugly.' Her frame shook with partly suppressed laughter, as she began to open her basket, which she had held all of the time. "Here! I brought you over a young chicken for

dinner. Thought perhaps you didn't have chicken every day," she explained, holding it out for inspection.

"Oh, Mrs. Doty! It is very good of you. I wanted to buy one, but I could not afford it. You have been a friend to us indeed, Mrs. Doty, and we appreciate it."

"That is all right, Mrs. Parkes. You have none too many friends. Is Jennie's cloak done yet? She would be so disappointed if it wasn't."

"Yes; and I hope she will like it. We think it's very pretty," Mrs. Parkes replied, bringing the garment for inspection.

"Here is the money. I guess it is all right?"

"Yes; must you go right away?"

"Oh, yes; I must get back, so that Jennie can try it on, and admire it before she goes."

"How nice it will be to go sleighing to-day," remarked Vina; "it has stopped snowing now, and the sun shines lovely."

"Yes;" said Mrs. Doty, as she moved toward the door; "Ned Brown asked her to go over to Thrumville to-day. Well, good morning to you."

"Come again, Mrs. Doty," Mrs. Parkes called out from the door.

"Oh, mamma, I am so glad it isn't James Blake," declared Vina, as soon as the door was shut. She fairly danced. "Wasn't she good to bring us a chicken; but she's always good. When she said that about jokes, you know, I thought I should laugh right out; but you looked so sorrowful, and I knew you——" she stopped short. "Oh, I hope Eunice will come. I hope Miss Eunice will come,"

she continued; and the saddened features of her mother brightened perceptibly.

The thought of Miss Olway started a train of hopeful expectation. Their darkened world might sometime come straight. The yawning blank might at last be banished. There was at least a hope in the presence of Eunice.

While these two were thinking of Eunice Olway, she herself was thinking of them, and of her plan for their happiness. There never had been better sleighing in the city since Eunice could remember, and the day was simply perfect; neither too cold for comfort, nor too warm to endanger the prospect of sleighing. The children were radiant. Little Dora was a picture of delight, and Hollister, too much of a boy to be quiet long, was clapping his chubby hands as he slid along the floor, crying, "Det up, pony!" in imitation of a sleigh-ride which he was clamorous to have, according to promise.

"Auntie Oonie, Dody and me's doin' to wide wif ou, wight away, ain't we?" Hollister demanded, clutching at Eunice's skirts, and kicking up his joyous little heels alternately, while he looked up into her face with confident inquiry.

"Yes, dear, pretty soon; but you must be patient, you know, just like a happy-new-year boy," she answered, giving him a hug, which he returned with such warmth, that he was fairly lifted off his feet by the demonstration.

Then Dora having come up for her share, there was more laughter, and indeed so much that it brought Mrs. Garton Olway into the room.

"Why, children, what a commotion! Is this my

nice-mannered little boy and Dora? Well, I did not suppose Aunt Eunice would teach you to waltz, but you do it to perfection." This was accompanied by a pleasant laugh, and then she continued: "What will you ever do with such boisterous children, Eunice? See here, dears, unless you are good——"

"We are dood, we are dood," interrupted Hollister. "Oh, mamma, we do ponying wi' Auntie Oonie s–o!" and he drew back upon imaginary lines, and whizzed off across the room.

"Holly and I are going to have fun, aren't we, Auntie Eunice?" asked Dora, who always spoke with a quaint preciseness, and what was more remarkable, with scarcely a grammatical error. Correct speech seemed innate in the child. Then with a whirl and a thrill of glee, she ran away.

"What happy creatures children are," said their mother, in her mild treble. "How do you get along with them so beautifully—I mean everybody's children. Before I was married I never could bear to have them around. Of course I did not really dislike them, but they were a great deal of trouble. Why it is, I do not know, but you seem to love all children, Eunice, even rag-a-muffins; and the more dirty and mischievous they are, the better you appear to like them, I believe. I guess, Eunice, on the whole you are a kind of a saint, as Mr. White calls you." The speaker's face smiled all over now, wreathing itself with dimples in cheek and chin, and setting off bewitchingly the sparkling brown eyes and delicate features. She was very pretty as she stood there, small in stature, with fair skin, waving brown hair, and eyelashes to match.

"Ah, yes, Lena, picture me as St. Eunice, the patroness of rag-a-muffins. But these are the dearest rag-a-muffins I have," she added, catching the two young teamsters on their way to the window, as the sleigh bells began to jingle outside.

"Huwah! det my fings on twick! Oh, huhwy up, please!" exclaimed Hollister, entreatingly.

"Come, let's go to grandma's room, Holly! She'll fix us up nice and quick," said Dora. And off they ran to be made ready for their ride.

"So you are really going to see that queer-looking old woman in black that used to come here so much, are you?" asked Lena, when the room was quiet. "She did look as if she had lost her last friend. But, really, I think it is wonderfully good of you to do so much for her; but then it is just like you. I think you do too much for people, though, Eunice. You just wear yourself out, and I think that is not right. 'Self preservation is the first law of nature.' You see I do remember one quotation." She was talking as she went on with her embroidery and while Eunice was wrapping some packages which were to be taken on the trip to Milston. Presently Lena added, looking up brightly: "I won't complain, Eunice, as you are going to give the children a pleasure trip and relieve me, as I shall need all my time to devote to New Year's calls to-day. There goes the bell now," and so saying, she arose and left the room to add the finishing touches to her toilet.

"So Lena does think it is good of me to do things for people," thought Eunice. "If she only knew how I love to do it; if she only knew. Her

thoughts were here interrupted by the entrance of the children, who were bringing in grandma in triumph.

"We're all ready, Auntie Eunice," declared Dora, proudly.

"Whoa! Dive us a det on twick!" Hollis shouted through the window at Tom, who had just driven up.

Then grandma laughed, and Aunt Eunice laughed at the funny little remark. Presently young Mrs. Olway came down for a minute in order to kiss her darlings good-bye. Mr. Olway just now entered with a cool breeze as the doors flew open, and it was not long before the travelers, with paper bags and mysterious bundles were warmly tucked in the sleigh. The bells jingled merrily, a few more words were spoken and they were off, bounding past many a slower team, to the great delight of the three on the back seat.

CHAPTER III.

THE STAR OF THE "NIGHT-SHADES."

O Love Divine!—whose constant beam
Shines on the eyes that will not see,
And waits to bless us, while we dream,
Thou leavest us because we turn from thee.
—*J. G. Whittier.*

IT was just before midnight—the first midnight after New Year's eve. The city streets were quiet. Only now and then the jingle of bells could be heard approaching, and then dying away on the clear night air. The echo of footsteps sounded only occasionally, as a policeman moved up and down his beat, or a belated citizen hurried home to his warm fireside. The calm face of the heavens kept silent guard over tenement and mansion, alike watchful of the weary sleeper and the excited night-reveler. The starry beams of the full moon were rudely excluded from many an interior, where thoughts of a kindly heaven were farthest from the occupants. Yet from such interiors bars cannot entirely shut out the friendly interest of the human heart, nor the observant eyes of the skilled detective.

While such were on their wonted quest, an interesting comedy, or rather tragedy, was enacting within closed walls. "The Night-shades" had received its name from a wit, and the "Star of the Night-

shades" was at present the chief attraction. To describe this place is difficult. It was one of those places of gas-light glare and deadly atmosphere, surcharged with a subtle charm, so enchanting to the reckless pleasure-seeker; it was, in short, the rendezvous of unseemly mirth and gayety.

To-night the new idol of "The Night-shades" held full sway. She was a young woman, scarcely out of her teens; and, as she stood in the center of the room, with her tall, slight figure arrayed in evening dress, and her fair hair arranged to show its abundance, she appeared to the best advantage. She was reciting and gesturing at the same time, with such *esprit* and confident grace as might be the result of long and continued training. From the words it seemed to be partly an original impersonation which she had prepared, and partly *impromptu*, as the audience or her excited state of mind, inspired.

"Begone! Thou culprit base,
Think not to win my heart by paltry means.
Pour out your sparkling wine, cast in your pearls,
I will have pearls to drink, to drink,—
Pearls and the ruby wine!"

She impersonated the above with Cleopatra-like attitude, and a highly tragic air. Then, suddenly assuming the character of the culprit, she implored:

"Oh, most beauteous wine-sipper,
Pray let me be your wine-dipper,"

at which a wild burst of applause broke forth, while the glasses clinked, as all drank the toast, "Cleopatra of the Night-shades."

Just at this moment two tall, dark figures were moving carefully along the walk, and finally turned down the cross-street which passed "The Night-shades" resort. One of the men was of medium height, and his lithe form was hidden by a long overcoat, slouching fur cap, and high collar, from the front of which protruded a long, frosted black beard. His eyebrows were shaggy, and his eyes alert. His companion was taller and larger; and, in contrast to his companion, had only a mustache. They talked softly to each other and kept constant watch, as if searching for some particular place.

Finally one said: "There are a good many of them. I have seen enough in my day. I could tell you a few things if I chose."

"Yes; I dare say you see more of this side than the other," returned his companion of the mustache. "'Tis well to know both sides, at least to know that both exist. I think I shall work better afterward, certainly more intelligently."

"We're almost there know. I know a door through which we can enter by a night-key. I know the place pretty well, you see. I shall manage and get you in, or at least, give you a sight. But be sure you remember my signs," whispered the man with the beard.

The revelry was at its height when the two men passed along the dark passageway into which the night-key had admitted them.

"The proprietor of this establishment knows there is no charm against my night-key," murmured the leader. "But he is off his guard to-night."

Now that they were inside the building, the par-

titions served as a thin barrier to the sounds of revelry in the inner apartment.

"I think I have my man," continued the bearded man; "yet the voice may deceive me. It is an ordinary one, having no individual intonations, but just like a hundred others."

After adjusting his dark-lantern, he led the way to the end of the hall, where appeared a narrow door. He softly turned the handle. It was locked. The noise within continued, and soon his key had accomplished its purpose. As he pushed the door open a little, some drapery was disclosed. Then, turning toward his companion, he gave him the sign to come nearer. Their overshoes made no noise. Amid the general confusion within no one was disposed to be suspicious, and a slight change in the folds of a drapery was not likely to be observed.

One sweeping glance, which took in the whole situation, was sufficient to satisfy the first restless pair of eyes; and one full view of the central figure in the room, one look at that old-young face, was enough to impress the second pair of eyes with a sight which their owner never forgot, nor ceased to recall without a shudder. As these two men made their retreat into the starlight, the detective—for the bearded man was of that class—said:

"Mistaken! but wasn't that a sight for you? That girl draws crowds just now, and they say she is a prodigy. Pity, isn't it? but many a bright one goes to ruin."

After a pause, the other returned: "What an expression! I shall never forget it. I tell you, Joe, we ought to be better men for that sight."

"Oh, you are not hardened yet, my man. A detective has to become hardened."

"God forbid!"

"I admit it sounds cruel to say so, but you can do nothing with them; at least, not much. They fall back again."

"'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,'" quoted the younger man, reverently.

"True; you are a minister, and I suppose it is your place not to give them up. I tell you I admire those who don't give them up; and there are some. In my rounds, I will admit I have seen some, and I call them Christians, who plead with this sort right in these places, and sometimes they succeed, but usually not. Yet, after all, they are true blue, and a fellow can't help being touched."

Just before they parted, the younger man put his hand on the other's shoulder, and said: "Joe, I am glad you let me go with you. I trust it has made me a better man. I am sure I understand my mission now as I never did before. Good-night."

Ernest Radcliffe did not sleep much that morning. He had been out with his friend, the detective, several times during the past few weeks, as he wished to get a glimpse beneath the life of the city, where evil brooded, in order that he might know better how to cope with the forces of darkness when he went out to the realities of his calling. But no scene had impressed him as this one had. The face of that young girl, evidently very young in years, had about it an appearance of evil experience that seemed to him a desecration of girlhood. Its mockery of brilliant gayety, amid such surround-

ings, was calculated to make a deep impression upon one whose reverence for womanhood was innate, and whose contact with the "gentler sex" had been such as to inspire him with high aims. He was the pride and hope of a noble mother, who was an example of womanly excellence. Moreover, he had been called to the ministry when very young, and had been in constant preparation ever since, from the academy to the college, and later to the theological seminary.

He was now ready to enter upon active service in the world, and had already accepted a small charge. It had seemed a good field, because quite a barren and uncultivated place. The chief desire of this young minister was that the wilderness might blossom as the rose. He did not want an easy or lucrative place. He had desired to go immediately into mission work upon the completion of his studies, either at home or abroad; but there had been no distinct call, and he always waited for a clear direction. On the contrary, the call to his accepted charge had been unmistakable.

"I shall sometime work in the city yet; among just such classes too, I believe, notwithstanding what the professors say," Ernest Radcliffe thought, as he lay upon his bed. "What do they know about the needs of the city; personally I mean? Ah! but don't boast yourself. How long is it since you realized what is going on even in Brooklyn? Theory is easy; but discussing the nature of evil, or the doctrine of original sin, does not make one feel the sinfulness of sin, nor the horrors of its consequences. If we resorted to the study of these

object lessons more, and theory less, I believe there would be more vital interest in the theology that deals with these, and kindred themes."

With thoughts like these, his active mind was easily occupied until just before dawn, when he lost consciousness in a sense of the Heavenly Father's love, and the final triumph of good.

That was the happiest time that Mrs. Parkes and Vina enjoyed for a good while, when the two-seated sleigh jingled before the door, and from it stepped the two children and Miss Olway, all burdened with packages, even to little Hollis, who shouted out, "'Appy Noo 'ear!" evidently by previous request, for he soon added: "My finners is awful cold; I 'ant to 'arm 'em twick."

After Miss Olway had told the driver at what time to call for them again, they all entered the house. Mrs. Parkes was so overjoyed that her eyes filled with tears as she turned to Eunice, who said, cheerily:

"See what the children have brought you! They were wonderfully delighted to come, and I knew you and Vina too would like to see them."

"Oh, indeed we are glad to see them, Miss Eunice; indeed we are," exclaimed Mrs. Parkes, with grateful fervor.

Meanwhile Vina had first hugged the children, and then listened to a prattling explanation from Dora, to the effect that it had been great fun riding over to Milston. "Holly nearly froze himself," she declared, adding: "He's a baby yet, you know; but I didn't get cold, neither did Aunt Eunice."

"No, I ain't a baby, Dody; ou's naughty! Ou's a baby and a dirl! I's a bid boy," Hollis exclaimed, resentfully, with a wry face, as he ran over to Miss Olway. "I ain't a baby, is I, Auntie Oonie?"

"No, dear, you are both little jewels, but you must not quarrel, because that is not lovely," Eunice answered, between other remarks.

When they had examined the packages, Mrs. Parkes and Vina were jubilant.

"It was so thoughtful of you! You've been such a friend to us ever since——" but here Mrs. Parkes broke down again.

"Now, mamma," said Vina, reproachfully, "crying when Miss Eunice is here!"

"I know, but somehow I cannot help it. It is not because I am so sorrowful," she whispered in her broken treble; "Miss Eunice knows."

And then Miss Olway put her arms around the poor woman, and stroked her head soothingly, while the children looked on in silent wonder, until Hollis, to suit the general strangeness of the occasion remarked, as he rubbed his eyes sympathetically:

"I put my eyes out o' joint toming. Dey slipped so bad on the snow," and he squinted them in order to illustrate the way in which the experience had affected him.

This was like magic. They all laughed heartily at this queer remark, for he often indulged in similar odd expressions to the amusement of the older folks. Hollis always considered the laughter complimentary, and heartily joined in the merriment, but

Dora was usually embarrassed, and if the fun was carried too far, it was sure to wound her feelings.

Seeing what an agreeable change had been wrought in the present situation, Dora looked upon her brother as quite a hero.

Vina was always a favorite with children. She gave herself up to their pleasure with simple devotion; indeed, in years she was but a mere child herself, although older people were apt to treat her as if mature.

The three children had a most delightful frolic, while Miss Olway helped Mrs. Parkes arrange some of the good things on the table, for the latter insisted upon preparing at least a lunch, although all had been to dinner. Miss Olway talked during the time comfortingly, in answer to questions about Celia, and deciding what would become of the mother and Vina.

"I have a plan to propose by-and-by, Mrs. Parkes, in regard to Vina; but first I want to talk with you a little about the Sunday-school."

They discussed the probability of a good-sized class, and who could be induced to join on the start, and various other phases, in which Vina, having overheard the topic of conversation, immediately became interested.

"I have told James Blake about it," she interrupted, "and he says he will be glad to come, and he will get as many other boys to come as he can. He said you must be very clever to think of doing such a thing."

Many other things they talked about, and then Miss Eunice and her little charges turned their

backs upon the good cheer they had brought to this home, and then had a merry ride back to their own finer one in the city.

It was quite late the next day before they came away from the schoolhouse where the new Bible school had been organized. The children had been left at Uncle's Rod's, whose comfortable farmhouse was two miles away. There they had spent the previous night, and from there they would start for home, after Tom had called for Miss Eunice at Mrs. Parkes'.

The Bible-school proper was to be held on Friday afternoons, with the teachers' Bible-class in the evening, so that Eunice might superintend it, at least for a while, and be enabled to return to the city on Saturday, ready for her own class to which she was deeply attached.

"James Blake is a promising boy, and he seems so interested and anxious to learn. He ought to have opportunities," said Miss Olway, as they were reviewing the prospect. "Little Tommy Trim, and Jane, is it? too are very bright. In fact, they are all interesting, and we have neglected them so long. I am glad the work has fallen to me, and to you too, Mrs. Parkes and Vina. You will be such a help."

"We will do what we can to please you," Mrs. Parkes answered, "but it seems as if we needed it the most ourselves. I can see now I used to read almost everything else when Celia was here but the Bible. If I had read the Bible more, maybe——"

She could go no farther, and so Miss Olway said, in an undertone: "You will teach Vina now.

Remember you have Vina. We must do everything for her."

Then after a pause, Mrs. Parkes dried her eyes, and smiled as she returned:

"You are so good to propose what you did for Vinie. How can we ever thank you! Of course I shall be very lonesome at first, but it is for the best, I know; and to think she can be with you. It is more than I ever dreamed of?"

This was the plan: Miss Olway had proposed that Vina should go to the city to attend school and live with her and her mother at their expense. Their means were not large, but they wished to use what they had to the very best advantage; and when they had talked it over, to spend it for Vina seemed to them the best thing to be done. Vina was to go to her home on Friday, and return to the city on Monday. Miss Olway would accompany her, but go home on Saturday. It seemed a very simple and natural thing to do, but it was a sacrifice for them to take Vina into their home. It was also something of a sacrifice to Eunice to go to Milston every week to superintend the Bible work; and she had not taken up her "cross" without a struggle. She knew that her going away would largely prevent the enjoyment of the "quiet times" with her mother which were so sacred to her. Eunice loved her home and her mother better than all else on earth; and to have Vina there, however much she loved the child, meant a less free communion between herself and her mother.

This putting aside of self was very painful; the more so as she did not feel positive that its effect

on Vina would justify such a sacrifice. But she nobly stifled this doubt, knowing that it was not a suggestion of her better self. Moreover, after she had really made up her mind "to lose her life" in "everything," she did it with a joy which she had never before experienced. She was glad, she said to herself, that she had obeyed her "heavenly vision."

Thus her time was fully occupied, as she constantly added new cares. She could not have lived an idle life, for it would have been unendurable to one of her nature. So, aside from the Milston enterprise another matter claimed her attention. A new mission was just started in the city. It was opened in the very worst quarter, in order to reach the most sinful and degraded classes, and Miss Olway became greatly interested. She was sure she should help it along all she could when she found that it was a genuine effort; and she finally persuaded her mother to go with her to one of the meetings, to the great horror of her sister-in-law. Even Garten disapproved, and afterward observed:

"Eunice, I commend your earnestness, but a young lady is not called upon to attend a meeting for outcasts in the worst part of the city at night." Then seeing her pained look, he added, more gently: "Of course I know mother went with you, but you women are too good to understand the danger. I beg of you, don't go again! but if you must," and he smiled faintly, "don't fail to let me go too."

Eunice tenderly loved and admired her brother, and was greatly grieved by the apparent coldness in

his religious life since his marriage. But he was still the same loving Garton to her and his mother, and would do anything to please them, whatever might be his personal indifference or dislike. For he looked upon them as "model Christians," although he felt that he must ever fall below their ideal example.

Garton Olway was the editor of the most successful newspaper in the city, and to his credit and the credit of his readers, let it be said that he kept its moral standard high. He proved to the satisfaction of himself and his friends that a paper could prosper if it did not pander to the low tastes of the public. His paper was bright and thoroughly secular, but never trashy.

Of this his mother was truly proud, and once said to Eunice: "I do not fear for Garton, dear; he has the true metal and will turn out as noble as his father was before him. Lena too is a sweet little woman, and has great possibilities in her. She has been brought up very differently from you, you know, Eunice."

This was shortly after the ride to Milston, and Eunice replied: "I often think, mother, that she is much lovelier than I ever would have been in her circumstances. To be born a slave to fashion would have utterly spoiled me—disposition and all; yet she seems to enjoy that atmosphere. Would it ever have been natural to me?"

"That part of her has always been emphasized, dear. Where you are very rich, she is lacking."

"'Freely have ye received, freely give'; that must be our motto, must it not, mamma?"

Eunice always talked to her mother like a simple child. They both enjoyed this freedom; and indeed, if ever restraint should come, each thought she would rather die than endure it.

Then they began to talk of their protégé. In answer to Mrs. Olway's question, "Is Vina at all like her sister?" Eunice replied, thoughtfully:

"In some ways Vina is very much like Celia. She is quick and bright with her answers, and often surprises me by her intelligent remarks. You know Vina is very young yet. You would hardly believe that she is only thirteen when you see her, although she is so slight and airy-looking. Yes, she reminds me of Celia as I first knew her, and it frightens me sometimes; but she is gentler, more pliable,—no, not that either—Celia was pliable, too pliable I used to think. Well, Vina is more affectionate, I guess that is it, and her life has been different. She has had to suffer, poor little thing! Celia's case has impressed her, I think, indelibly, and if we do our part for the dear child, I believe she will turn out to be a true woman. Mrs. Parkes told me with a shudder, the other day, when Vina was out, how quick she is with her books. She studies and reads all by herself, and Mrs. Parkes says she has an 'awful imagination.' Poor Mrs. Parkes! How some of her expressions would annoy Lena; but Lena will like Vina."

Lena did not at all object to Vina's coming, especially when she found that the girl liked children. Moreover, Vina's presence would not necessarily affect Garton's household, for Eunice and her mother lived almost entirely by themselves, sitting

at the same table with the others only on holidays or special occasions, when all wished to be together.

The reasons for the separation were obvious. Mrs. Olway and Eunice did not care for elaborately served meals, or gay company; but preferred the retirement of a quiet table, made merry now and then by the presence of the children. But Mrs. Garton Olway had been accustomed to a different manner of living; and it was in a measure due to her own family to continue it. Besides, Garton, as a public man, had to entertain frequently. The house was large enough to accommodate both styles of living, and now it seemed natural that the two should exist harmoniously side by side. Garton mildly acquiesced in his pretty wife's mode of life. But there was no dancing or card-playing in his home, although Lena had at first mildly protested. In this, however, he was as mildly firm.

"Lena," said Garton to his wife, as they were alone in their room one evening, soon after Vina had come into the family, "that is a winsome little girl Eunice has taken to bring up."

'Yes; it does not seem possible that that plain-faced woman who used to come here can be her mother. It is a pity about her sister, isn't it? You remember something about it, you know; mother and Eunice became as distressed over it as if it was in our own family. But it is a great pity—I wonder if Vina realizes the disgrace."

"I dare say she does not; and do you know, wifie, in the light of that affair I think it is beautiful of mother and Eunice to take her. Those women look ahead a great way," returned Garton. "Really,

they are beyond us, wifie; we could never keep up with them."

"Garton, you are away beyond me now—I don't even understand what you are talking about. Of course it is lovely of them to take her, but then she is such an attractive little thing; I would not mind having her with us; she would make a charming maid. She acquires so easily refined manners. I can see that already, and she is so quick to discern. Have you noticed what excellent language she uses for so young a child. Eunice tells me she is only thirteen."

"Really! She must be exceedingly bright."

"Oh, indeed she is! Eunice says it is marvelous how quickly she learns. Her sister was just as bright too. Do you know," she added, drawing nearer to her husband, "when I heard that, I wondered if there was bad blood in the father of these children. Vina does not show it, but if there is, it is sure to tell sooner or later, and nothing can hinder it."

A faint sigh, ending in a yawn, followed this observation, and Garton, who was very weary, suggested it was time for them to retire.

CHAPTER IV.

VARIOUS CHANGES.

Life is that whole to which all parts belong.—*Anon.*

VINA fitted into her new life very readily, and soon became accustomed to the change. She was promoted two or three times in rapid succession beyond the grade where those of her age usually stood. She looked upon Miss Olway as very near a saint, and was worshipfully obedient to her slightest wish. Eunice, on her part, studied the child with the added interest and love which she had once bestowed upon her sister. To Mrs. Olway, Vina gave her heart unreservedly. At the first sight she was drawn into the protecting motherly arms; and she felt, although she could not explain it, that she should never be afraid of that calm, sweet face. There was somewhat more reverence in her love for Miss Olway.

Vina wrote frequently to her mother of her new surroundings, and Eunice encouraged the correspondence.

"She will be so happy to hear all about what you are doing, and how you like everything, you know," Miss Olway told her one day.

"Yes, Miss Eunice, my letter will amuse mamma, I know; but she will be distressed when she reads how they have promoted me," Vina returned, with

a quick smile. A shadow of disappointment passed over Miss Olway's face, and Vina, perceiving it, added with a slight blush, "I should not have said that, should I? But if I am like Celia in that way, I need not be in any other, need I? I could not be, now that I know you."

"The child is very discriminating," thought Eunice that night, as she reviewed the conversation. "It will be all the surer, because she is wide awake, if she only goes right. God help her, and help me!"

Not long after parting with his friend, the detective, Ernest Radcliffe went to his new charge. If he entered upon his duties with the hidden hope that some time he should be called to the field which even then seemed to him most urgently in need,—city mission work,—he nevertheless began courageously, knowing that the work which now demanded his concentrated attention, lay in another quarter.

Ernest Radcliffe's charge was a country village church, with an additional small mission. The amount of salary was very small, but there was a large field for labor in the surrounding farm district. The mission was in a scattered settlement, possessed of one building, in which was the store and the post-office and a district schoolhouse, where religious services were held. The manner of holding these services had been somewhat desultory, as it was entirely dependent upon the efforts of the pastor at the regular charge. Previous to Ernest Radcliffe's pastorate the ser-

vices had been few, and at best very irregular, particularly in the winter.

But this condition of things was an incentive to the young minister. Here was an opportunity for hard, earnest labor in a community hitherto debarred from regular gospel privileges. He made generous plans. The mission appointment should not be slighted; but, first of all, he must reconnoitre, and call upon those who formed the membership of his church. That was right he thought, for of course he must begin at Jerusalem; but someway he early felt that his chief interest after all would be at the mission, for upon inquiry he ascertained that there were a great many young people there.

"Oncommon tough, some on 'em," one old man declared, with a shrug of the shoulders; "though they's scattered about, which is a good thing, as our pastor said. He give up trying to do much with 'em."

"Sheep without a shepherd!" was Ernest Radcliffe's mental comment. "My Father knew best. It is evident I am in my right place."

It was not an altogether easy task, however, calling upon all the farmers, and at the homes of mill operatives, that were clustered in a certain section of his broad district; but with horse and cutter, and a determination to accomplish the work, he completed the rounds within a few weeks.

"Has the minister called yet?" asked Mrs. Doty, as she dropped in to see Mrs. Parkes and give her a new piece of sewing.

"No; I have not even caught sight of him yet; but then I have been away now for two Sundays in

the city at Mrs. Olway's, where Vinie is. They say he is very smart and interesting."

"Oh, ye-es, he is grand; so cordial, you know, and not a bit proud of his religion, as some are. Well! no use to talk against your betters, as Pete says."

"What is his name?" asked Mrs. Parkes, after a moment's reflection.

"Ratcliffe—or something like that. I guess he comes of an aristocratic family; he looks it. He has such pretty hands, though they are large. I always notice folks' hands, but Pete says, 'you better notice what they do.' Pete has an idea that hands are made to work, and makes such remarks when Jennie complains that washing dishes hinders her playing fine on the organ. But Pete isn't hard on his children; no, he likes to see them happy and enjoying themselves."

It was not long after this, however, before the new minister called. From Mrs. Doty he had heard most of the history of Mrs. Parkes, and of her recent sorrow in the disappearance of her daughter. His sympathy was attracted to the lone woman, and he resolved to give her what comfort he could.

Mrs. Parkes was not only glad to see him, but also to hear of his proposed plans for the mission work, which was quite near her home. And she added:

"Miss Eunice will be glad, and Vinie, my daughter."

"Is your daughter at home now?" Mr. Radcliffe asked.

"No; she is in the city, at school; but she comes

home every Friday. You know I have another daughter, Celia; but she has given me much trouble," and her eyes filled with tears.

"Yes; I have heard of your trouble," he answered, conveying such sympathy and helpfulness in his tone that Mrs. Parkes almost broke down. She told him, somewhat incoherently, how her daughter had gone away without so much as saying good-bye; how Miss Olway had been such a friend to them; how she had already taken Vina into her home, and had started a Bible-school; all this was interlarded with many other things, partly in praise of Miss Olway, and partly in commiseration of herself.

When she had finished, Mr. Radcliffe remarked: "You spoke of a Miss Olway. Does she live in the city?"

"Yes," was the somewhat eager reply. "Do you know her?"

"No; but I think I knew her brother in college. I knew a Garton Olway who lived in Rochester."

"It is the very same one, because her brother's name is Garton. How odd! but I am very glad. You must meet her, and see if she is not just the loveliest girl, as I said. She comes every Friday and leads the Bible-class."

"I should be happy to meet her," he replied. "I admired her brother very much in college, but we have not met since."

After a few more words of social cordiality he asked the privilege of reading a short passage from his Bible. Then he knelt down, and offered a short, earnest prayer.

"I never had anything do me so much good since the time Miss Eunice talked to me right after our trouble," Mrs. Parkes confessed to a neighbor, who also, on her part, owned that the new minister's visits were very helpful.

Not long after this conversation James Blake addressed Miss Olway as she and Vina were descending the schoolhouse steps, after Bible study one Friday evening. "Will you allow me to walk with you and Vina," he said, "as you have some little distance to go, and meanwhile may I ask you a few questions?"

Coming as this did from a tall lad of seventeen, who spoke in respectful tones, entirely free from the trepidation of ordinary bashfulness, it seemed to Eunice that it indicated an unusually manly youth. For, although he had a certain awkwardness of manner, or rather of movement, it was not caused by self-consciousness, but was the result of his size. Yet, despite his large proportions, there was a gentleness about him which she had been quite unprepared to find. It bespoke itself in his mild, black eyes, and quiet, even voice.

"Certainly, Mr. Blake," returned Miss Olway. "I am sure we shall be glad of your company," she added, smiling pleasantly, "and I will try to answer you, if you do not ask too hard questions."

Vina held tightly to Eunice's arm, and listened in silence (quite new for her) as James Blake spoke.

"It is about what I ought to do," he said, as they walked along; "I mean in life. Father is a plain farmer, you know, and I have always worked at

home, except during the winter, when father allowed me to go to the district school, and last year to the academy at Thrumville, expecting that when I grew up and had enough education, I would be a farmer, just as he had been; and now—well! perhaps it is wrong: but I don't like farming. I never really thought I would be a farmer when I grew to be a man; and mother, she rather encouraged me a little by saying that perhaps I should not have to be. Now what I am coming to is this; we have been studying about Paul, and how he had such a clear call to his work. Do you think that such guidance is the privilege of every Christian?" He looked down with eager inquiry for her answer.

"It is the blessed privilege of every Christian to be guided into all his life-work," she answered, unhesitatingly. "We are not all called in the same way as Paul was. Indeed, I hardly think any two are directed alike; but," and she said this with quite the emphasis peculiar to herself, "we all may receive unmistakable direction, if we will look for it; yes, though we must sometimes wait for it."

"Thank you," he said; "I was not sure it could be so. It seemed so wonderful to me; and yet, after all, it is natural too," he added, after a momentary pause.

"Very natural that our Father should lead us. Have you any especial calling in mind?" she presently asked. "I do believe we are sometimes led through the help or advice of others."

"Yes," he answered, as if grasping a new idea. "I had not thought before that we could be led in that way; I thought it must be direct, if at all."

"If the indirect is unmistakable?"

"That is it; how are we sure that it is?" he asked.

But just at this point they met some one in the road. Miss Olway, in her earnest conversation, had not noticed the approach of a gentleman who was coming toward them. Vina had been watching the figure in the twilight, but only indifferently, as she too was absorbed in what was being said.

"Good-evening, Mr. Blake," said the strange gentleman, lifting his hat. "You are just coming from Bible study, I imagine. And this is Miss Vina Parkes, I believe. I saw you on Sunday, with your mother," he added.

"Mr. Radcliffe, this is Miss Olway—Miss Eunice Olway, of whom mamma has talked to you, I am sure," Vina remarked, with a mischievous twinkle in her eye.

"Miss Olway, this is indeed a pleasure. I really feel quite well acquainted with you already. Perhaps I have rather an unfair advantage."

"I have heard of you also, Mr. Radcliffe, from the same source. Mrs. Parkes said she thought you knew my brother, and then I remembered he had often spoken of you as a very dear friend."

"He and I were in college together. He was two classes ahead of me, but we were warm friends; we belonged to the same fraternity, you know. I remember him with pleasure. I quite revered him once." He put a touch of boyishness into these last words.

"When you were a freshman, no doubt," Miss Olway said, with a smile.

"Yes, and later," he replied, as he raised his hat, and bade them good evening.

As they walked on, James said: "That man is the kind of a minister I like. He does not try to show off what he knows; and somehow he gets hold of the boys. They all speak well of him; and he is the first one they have not tormented. Some of them at least, ever since I can remember."

"Why not ask his advice about your life-work?" Eunice suddenly suggested. "I am sure he would gladly help you, and he has had experience as a boy himself."

"I do believe I will," he answered; "but I thank you for your help. I felt that I could trust whatever you said."

"Thank you, James. May God direct and prosper you."

They were at Mrs. Parkes' gate, and Vina could keep still no longer. With a quick breath and "I say so too, James," she relinquished Eunice's arm, and darted into the house so suddenly that the two outside were astonished.

"What a spry little maiden she is!" exclaimed Eunice.

"Yes," James assented, coloring a little. "Good-night, Miss Olway."

"Good-night."

Mr. and Mrs. Blake were highly respected in their own neighborhood. Mr. Blake had been a hard-working man, and would have been well to do had he not recently sustained a heavy financial loss. Farming never had brought in money very fast, but it was safe and sure; he had that consolation now.

He, for one, had never believed in agriculture on too large a scale, with all the modern improvements; so, instead of adding constantly to his farming resources, he had invested his savings in a mill enterprise, which had been, and promised to be, highly prosperous. But suddenly it failed; and now the farm was all that they had, except a little income belonging to Mrs. Blake. They had but one child, however, and James was a strong, faithful boy, who was willing to work. But to the great disappointment of his father, he preferred other employment to the farm.

"It is too bad, Harriet," said Mr. Blake to his wife one day; "it is too bad, when he is our only son, that he does not like to work the homestead place. It does somewhat annoy a man of my age not to have a son who will step into my shoes. It is because I know that farming is a safe business that makes me so anxious; and you know what failing is, Harriet; we have had our taste of that."

"Yes, John, with all your calculating. Of course I know it was due to that mill investment. But then, what if you had put your money in farm lands out west, and a panic had come, as they sometimes do, what better off would you have been with all that land on your hands, and the taxes to pay, and all?"

"That is different, Harriet. I would not have invested in *western* lands."

"You cannot tell; you might. Any way," she proceeded, with calm persistence, "I do not believe we can plan, and be sure it is all coming out right. Of course I mean in money matters. I believe

that the righteous will never be found begging bread; but as to luxury——"

"Look here, Harriet! I don't want luxury for James, but I would like to see him well established before we die."

"Now, John, don't borrow trouble about James. He will prosper, if any boy will. He has it in him. He is cautious like you, and hopeful like me, and for my part, I don't care about his always being a farmer if he finds he is cut out for something else."

"Well, Harriet, you always get the best of it, and I don't mean to worry; but things look rather uncertain sometimes."

"James is young yet, you know," she said, her face brightening, "and he wants an education. People now-a-days must have more schooling than they did in our day, although I always made the most of what I had; and don't you remember too, John, how anxious you were to keep on, after you had to work?"

"Oh, I mean James shall have a fair chance, but he is very intelligent now, Harriet; he is such a reader."

"So much the more reason why he should have schooling, John."

Such was the talk that occurred between Mr. and Mrs. Blake, a few days after James' conversation with Miss Olway.

James Blake was always a serious lad. He was not older than his years by any means, but unlike some of his companions, he scorned to play or enter into a joke which would wound some one. He looked upon it as unbecoming a man to aim

ridicule at the poor, old, or decrepit ones of the village. However, he was fond of all boyish sports, and many were the coon hunts in which he indulged. In the winter, when the hills were in good condition, he was always ready to give some one a ride, and his "double ripper" was ever in great demand. Altogether he was greatly respected by all the boys and girls in Milston, even after his return from the academy, though certain ones had prophesied that he would be "too fine for anything." So it is not surprising that he succeeded in interesting a goodly number in the Bible classes, nor strange that when Mr. Radcliffe came all were ready to endorse his opinion of the new minister.

Vina Parkes had never attended school at Milston, for she had been too busily occupied at home. But in the course of time she had become acquainted with most of the girls and boys, and among them James Blake. He always spoke to her kindly, for he felt sorry for her, because of the stories afloat about her sister; and there had come to be pleasant friendship between them. Vina greatly enjoyed telling him some funny story, and watching the puzzled look on his face, until it finally dawned upon him that she was joking. Even then he seldom laughed, but his large, black eyes would take on a peculiar softness which always pleased her. He never criticised her actions or questioned her motives, but mutely accepted her for what she seemed, without doubt or analysis.

Since Vina had lived in the city, she had had fewer talks with James, and although there was no apparent coldness in their friendship, yet she felt

that there was a difference which she did not like. It troubled her after that walk home from the Bible-class, and she often wondered what could be done.

"I am going right along in my studies," she thought. Could it be possible that she was leaving him behind?

One day, after she had been thinking on the subject, she said to Miss Olway, "I wish James had such a good friend as I have; one who would put him through school."

"I wish so too, Vina, and I have been wondering how we could help him." She always included Vina now in her plans of helping others.

"Could Garton help him?" the latter had almost asked, but concluded that she had better not. A feeling that Eunice would know just what was the best thing to do, together with a sense of the ridiculousness of her trying to help James, made her hesitate. Vina was learning to believe that somehow all would come around right in the end without her interference.

Association with the Olway family was teaching Vina a great many things. Every afternoon, as soon as her studying was over, she had a good romp with the children, in which Eunice also joined, when she had the time at her disposal. Hollis and Dora looked forward each day to this hour with Vina, which was spent in the nursery if the weather was unpleasant, or in the playground in the back yard when the sun shone. It was a pleasure also to Vina, and brought a faint color in her cheeks; for she was a delicate-looking child, although apparently in perfect health.

If there was any one thing in which Vina excelled in the children's eyes, it was as a story-teller. Indeed, she was the most delightful one they had ever captured; and, what was most entrancing, she would act out the stories, making herself anything from the "Witch of Endor," to "Rip Van Winkle." Moreover, her tales usually had a different version at each rehearsal, and this fact did away with all monotony.

But with all its advantages, this elasticity of narration was not wholly pleasing to Hollis; for at times when Vina changed the fate of the chief character, he would exclaim, impatiently: "Don't!" If "Jack" once fell from the top of his bean-stalk and broke his neck, that was the end of him for Hollis. He would not have anything to do with a "Jack" who soon sat up, and began "to eat bad little boys," as the latter fell into some guilty scrape. This rejection of the marvelous was remarkable in so young a child; but Vina soon noticed that it made quite a difference when "Jack" fed upon "bad little girls" under similar circumstances.

Hollis was a stanch upholder of his own sex; but Dora was more liberal, drinking in the tales with uncritical delight. Each, however, was overflowing with a child's abundance of questions.

Once Dora, after looking mysteriously at Vina, whispered: "Aren't you Celia?" Dora had often seen Celia, when Eunice had brought her to the house, and Celia had held and talked to the child, sometimes favoring her with a story, told in the same animated style so natural to Vina. Yet more than two years had passed since then; but Dora had

often overheard the name. "I love Celia," she continued, with keen scrutiny. "No; you aren't Celia, either."

"Why, Dora!" exclaimed Vina, "don't you know? I am Vina!"

But still the child was puzzled. It was a new, unanswered problem, and she afterward asked Miss Olway about it.

"Strange that the baby should see what we have tried not to see, isn't it, mother dear?" asked Eunice, in her mother's room, the same night. "It looks as if the likeness was pretty strong."

"I think Vina will be like what Celia might have been under other circumstances," Mrs. Olway answered, with a thoughtful expression in her eyes.

"Yes, mother, I see what you mean, and that is my great hope."

Vina's evenings were usually spent in "grandma's room," where the children often came for a little while before Eunice put them to rest. Eunice had begged Lena to let her care for the children instead of having a regular nurse; for she could not endure the thought of having her brother's children under the careless influence of an ignorant maid. So it was generally her great delight to put the little ones to bed.

During this interval, Vina and "grandma," as Vina sometimes called Mrs. Olway, in imitation of the children, would have a confidential talk. Occasionally Mrs. Olway took the girl into her lap, and fondled her like a baby. But this treatment was something Vina had never experienced before—Mrs. Parkes' tenderness was not of this sort. The

soft voice and caress, mingled with words that seemed to speak right to the girl's heart, and read her inmost thoughts and desires—these were in marked contrast with the qualifications Vina had hitherto considered available in a mother; and she could not avoid a comparison.

Favored with such an environment, Vina's pliant nature could not help being molded, to a great extent, by Eunice and Mrs. Olway. To be sure, Vina came in contact with Mrs. Garton Olway occasionally, but the latter was usually occupied with other and outside cares. So Vina reflected the Olway personality to such a degree that Mrs. Parkes was quite confident that this daughter at least was going to be a good girl, "like Eunice," and that her career might be one that would bring great joy to her.

CHAPTER V.

FRIENDS MEET.

Where friendship full exerts her softest powers,
Perfect esteem enlivened by desire
Ineffable, and sympathy of soul;
Thought meeting thought, and will preventing will,
With boundless confidence.

—*Thomson.*

IT was one of those capricious days in March, when the air grows balmy and makes one feel that spring is near at hand, if not already present in disguise, and then, just as she is almost in sight, she suddenly turns a cold shoulder as it were, and scatters a few flakes of snow, as if to give warning not to be too sure of her favors.

The day was Friday, and Miss Olway and Vina had come as usual from the city, and were just entering the house at Milston.

"Why, mamma, what have you the table all set for, and the best linen and china out?" asked Vina, as soon as her quick eyes took in the situation. "Are we going to have a tea-party?" She took off her cap and mittens, and catching up the kitten, tip-toed into the dining-room, with the purring mite of fur snuggled against her neck.

"You and Miss Eunice would like to know now, wouldn't you—eh?" Mrs. Parkes replied, her lips smiling, as she gave Vina a playful pinch on the

cheek. They had never seen her in such good spirits since her trouble with Celia. "Well, to satisfy your curiosity, I will tell you. The minister is coming to tea, and probably he will be at the Bible-class. Anyway, I asked him to come, and said: 'You can call for the girls at the schoolhouse, if you like,' and he returned, 'thank you, I think I will,—that is, if you think they would not object.' He was going to say 'Miss Olway,' but he stopped and said, 'they,'" she explained, with a bright look.

Eunice hardly knew what reply to make to this, but Vina remarked, rather wickedly:

"Mr. Radcliffe is very careful about his rhetoric, mamma. He always knows when to use a proper, and when a common noun."

The expected guest had evidently decided that there could be no objection to his walking home with the young women from the Bible-school; for he was waiting in the hallway as they came out, and explained that he did not enter, fearing to disturb the lesson. He shook hands cordially with all the young people, and was greeted as a general favorite, but with marked respect.

As they were going out, Vina managed to reply in an undertone to James Blake, who had come up and asked to walk home with her:

"Why, yes, James; I think it is good of you, for," nodding toward Eunice and Mr. Radcliffe, who were just in front, "they are company for each other, and——" but she left her sentence unfinished.

James looked down at her, with the shadow of a smile in his eyes. He seemed to see the propriety

of those two going together undisturbed, and said aloud:

"Aren't they both grand? If you and I were half as——"

"Now, James," she interrupted, "that is almost a sin. The idea of comparing us with them at all!"

This remark surprised him a little, and he said more earnestly:

"Why, Vinie, it isn't a sin to wish to become like your ideal, is it?"

His misconception made her laugh outright. "James, you are so obtuse, that I believe that if a girl proposed to you, you would never see the joke."

Such talk from her was painful to him. He never could understand a great many things Vina said, but he had never before thought her at all rude.

When she saw his utter misapprehension, she blushed, thinking that perhaps she had gone too far. "Don't you see, James, when I spoke about comparing us with them, I meant as a couple; for I believe Mr. Radcliffe likes Eunice very much, and mamma does too. And then, when you were so dull, I could not help that other speech. But don't scowl so, I did not mean a bit of it, and it is all because mamma invited him to tea." She could not endure losing James' good opinion.

After they had walked along for what seemed an age to Vina, the truth finally dawned upon James, and he exclaimed:

"O Vinie, you are so quick! But do you think you ought to be such a little rogue? You must not be a frivolous woman, Vinie. I could not bear

that," he added a moment later. When he saw that the tears were dangerously near her lashes, he continued, with a peculiar tenderness in his voice: "Forgive me, Vinie! but remember it makes a great difference to me what you are."

Just then Miss Olway's voice was heard from behind, calling:

"Vina dear, are you not coming in now?"

They had passed the house without perceiving it.

"You children were talking so earnestly I disliked to disturb you," she added, thinking that they had probably been discussing the lesson, as James had seemed so much impressed that afternoon.

Vina had no bright answer ready this time, but with a word to James, who lifted his hat as he bade them good-night, she passed through the gate with a sober face, which was unusual for her, and Eunice was more than ever convinced that James had impressed Vina with his earnestness, and was inwardly glad.

Waiting on the steps for her charge, Miss Olway put her arm about the slim little waist, as they entered the door, and Vina returned the caress with a kiss, but there was no time now for questioning.

Mrs. Parkes was in the hall to welcome them, and said, as she shook hands with Mr. Radcliffe: "I am very glad to see you! Here, Vinie, you take the minister's hat and coat."

"Oh, no, thank you!" he interrupted, laying aside his overcoat; "let me me wait on myself, please. I will hang it right up here," appropriating an empty hook behind the door.

Miss Olway's cheeks were rosy, and her eyes

were softly luminous. The touch of spring in the air made her almost jubilant. She had once said to a friend,—a woman much older than herself,—"I love all the seasons of the year, but every spring I renew my youth. The little hills within me clap their hands and sing, and the lambs skip for joy."

"That must be why you never grow old," was the answer.

Eunice was so full of the Bible that her spontaneous outbursts were sure to be colored by its phraseology.

To-night she seemed to shed a radiance like moonlight that gives chaste beauty to the most unseemly landscape. People generally likened her presence (when they thought or compared it with anything at all) to sunshine, and especially its warmth, because they felt that she thawed them out, so to speak. But she never dazzled them. No one could understand the influence of her presence, but accepted it as common blessing.

There was something aside from the season, however, that made her unusually happy that evening. It always brings joy to find a congenial friend, and especially a friend whose highest ideal accords with one's own.

During their short walk from the schoolhouse, Mr. Radcliffe talked of the higher life, and of his aspirations in a way that made Eunice's heart bound. They had talked upon that topic naturally enough. She had been speaking of the life of Paul and his wonderful consecration, her words still aglow with the teacher's enthusiasm, and finally he said:

"Do you know, Miss Olway, it is only of late that I have come to look upon that life with your conception of it? I thought I had appreciated it before, but I was grossly blind. The truth came to me through a strange impression which I received from a scene in real life," and he shrugged his shoulders at the thought. "You will not understand me, perhaps, but I had looked upon moral degradation as something impossible, something utterly foreign to me, that I had nothing to do with, as a Christian; but then, in an instant almost, I seemed to see myself as one in a sense responsible for that sin and misery which I beheld. I could not shake off the impression for days. I never realized before the responsibility which rests upon every Christian, indeed upon every enlightened man; responsibility for the spiritual, yes, and the general condition of others." He had spoken with intense earnestness, which thrilled her inmost soul.

"I too have felt the same, and I too had to learn it from a sad lesson; but," she added, and the sadness was all gone from her voice, "I have learned it, and it makes life truly grand!"

Then they were both silent, until he said: "I knew you understood; but it seemed as if you must have always known."

She was still thinking of this conversation after they had reached the house, where a change in the tenor of the talk had been made.

"You have had a cold walk, and must be hungry. I will soon have supper on the table," Mrs. Parkes remarked as they entered. Then she added as she

started toward the dining-room door, "Come, Vinie, can you help me a little?"

"Yes, mamma!" she answered, tripping out after her mother.

"Do let me come too," said Eunice, rising.

"No, Miss Eunice!" exclaimed Vina, turning round, and spinning like a top several times before coming to a standstill. "Do you hear that, mamma? Miss Eunice wants to help too."

"She must not do any such a thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Parkes, hurrying back into the room to add emphasis to her words. "No, Miss Eunice, you entertain Mr. Radcliffe, please. There is hardly anything to do, anyway."

Eunice yielded gracefully, and Mr. Radcliffe said, with a laugh:

"I should not dare offer my services after that."

"No, indeed," declared Mrs. Parkes, also laughing, as she hurried back to the kitchen.

"What a brisk little woman she is!" Mr. Radcliffe observed, after a moment.

"Yes," answered Eunice; "the dear woman has forgotten her great trouble in the thought of making us comfortable. She keeps up wonderfully, for Vina's sake, lately. I have noticed it often. She seems to have a stronger faith," she added, after a pause, and looking up thoughtfully.

"She said as much to me the other day, when I called."

"I am so glad you call often. It does her a world of good—your calling."

He looked pleased and replied, "I am sure it does me far more good to come."

Both were thoughtful for a moment, and then he continued, as if there had been no interruption to their talk before entering the house.

"After that revelation, I felt that it must have some connection with my coming here; at least, I feel that sometime I shall find a strange sequel to it all; the impression was so vivid. Perhaps I needed it as a preparation. The after life is always a sequel to what has gone before, and the truer we are as we go along, the more clearly we shall see it. Is it not so?"

"I think I know what you mean. You are led by direct impressions, and you feel that if you are true to the revelation of which you speak that you will sometime see in it the working out of a great purpose in your life?"

"That is it exactly," he said, emphatically, adding mentally: "What a pleasure it is to commune soul with soul," and he admitted, "with such a soul."

It was wonderful how naturally they talked together of these higher things, and how readily they understood each other's half-expressed thoughts.

"Come, now, everything is all ready," said Mrs. Parkes, suddenly appearing in the parlor door.

As they were seating themselves at the table, Vina remarked, looking at her mother: "Isn't it nice, mamma, being four square," making a quick gesture with her hand, which united herself and her mother and the other two.

"Indeed it is," Mrs. Parkes assented, with a smile.

Then their heads were reverently bowed while Mr. Radcliffe asked the blessing. There was a

little silence following his earnest words which Vina was the first to break.

"Mamma, the Bible-school is getting on beautifully. Nearly all the boys come now every time. They think Miss Olway is an angel," and she glanced sidewise at Eunice. "Yes, really. I heard one of them say so. This is just what he said: 'She's an angel!—none o' yer kind with wings pasted on like you see in story books. No, sir; but I declare, when she was talkin' as how Jesus was wunst a boy, and so good to his mother an' everybody, though he knowed he was God and had a right to do as he pleased, when he was in the temple, you know,—didn't yer see her face, how it all melted up into light like? My, thinks I, there is angels after all.' I didn't hear any more, because they went out the door. That was this afternoon when the children went away from Bible-school." Vina had remembered the way the boy had said it, and she imitated the voice and pronunciation so perfectly that they all involuntarily laughed.

Then Mr. Radcliffe, feeling the pathos of it, said: "It is the consecrated soul which attracts others. They always recognize the Christ-spirit, no matter how ignorant or simple. Is it not wonderful?"

All were serious now, although Vina at first had seen only the amusing side.

Vina's impersonation of the boy and her manner of doing it especially, started Mr. Radcliffe thinking. It seemed to bring up certain unpleasant associations strangely to his mind.

After supper they talked further about the prospects of the Bible-school, and Mr. Radcliffe ex-

pressed a wish that Milston would soon have a regular pastor. This led him to speak of his principal charge, and so the conversation went on pleasantly, and sometimes cheerily, into the evening.

Then there was some music, for Mrs. Parkes had an old cottage organ which had been bought for Celia in the days gone by. Vina played a little and Miss Olway and Mr. Radcliffe sang. They had never sung together before, and neither knew that the other had such a good voice. Eunice's voice was a rich mezzo-soprano, and when she sang, her whole soul seemed to flow into the words and tones.

Ernest Radcliffe was not surprised at her singing. "It was what I expected," he afterward said to himself. "It is the voice which would naturally go with such a face and character."

Evidently both enjoyed singing, for they kept on, going from one song to another, with scarcely a thought as to whether or not their hearers were enjoying it as well.

Mrs. Parkes, in fact, had never cared much for music; but she enjoyed it too, especially since Eunice was taking part.

At last Eunice exclaimed; "Why Vina! are you not tired? I did not imagine we had sung so long."

The clock was striking nine.

Mrs. Parkes' eyes were full of tears as Miss Olway turned away from the organ.

"How thoughtless and selfish I have been," Eunice thought. "The poor woman has been reminded of Celia. Perhaps we have sung something which Celia used to play."

"Ah, music takes away all sense of time and space. I must be going," Ernest Radcliffe said.

"Oh, no!" ejaculated Mrs. Parkes.

He stayed a little longer and talked chiefly with Mrs. Parkes. He too felt a little compunction about the singing. "I was to blame," he thought, "for I kept calling for piece after piece, but——"

After they had had a moment of reading and prayer, Mr. Radcliffe said, rising:

"It was very kind of you to invite me, Mrs. Parkes. I appreciate it, I can assure you." When he came to shake Eunice's hand in parting, he said in an undertone: "I am thankful for the privilege of meeting you here, Miss Olway." And then he went.

Eunice always looked back to this evening as an occasion of peculiar blessedness to her. She embalmed its memory, as it were, with sacred odors, scarcely daring to look at her treasure openly, but feeling, nevertheless, that it was a treasure.

As he went home to Milston, after the evening spent at Mrs. Parkes, Ernest Radcliffe was deep in thought. The possibilities of life were crowding thickly upon his mind. The past few weeks had brought him new and ever-deepening experiences; and he felt, more and more, that he was being "led in a mysterious way" into wider usefulness.

The church at Milston Center, although comparatively small, opened up a large field of work to his expectant eyes; he soon saw evidences of a "none-too-spiritual" devotion on the part of the majority of his members. He felt, but would not acknowledge it, that he was laboring under a disadvantage,

because his predecessor had sought to attract outsiders more than to build up the faith of those who were already in the church.

Many ministers perhaps, would have esteemed themselves forced to consider the problem, how far they might place popular approval below the real growth of the church itself, without offending those who were already members. But the question, with its subtleties of related influences, capable of human measurement, and calling for human consideration, never troubled Ernest Radcliffe. His idea of the preacher was that he should be a person who received his "message" directly from God; one who would always make his own conception of human needs, and his own weighing of possible grains of effect, subservient to the direct leading of the Spirit.

But, strange to say, the very plainness of speech, and the pointedness of his texts, instead of repelling, after a short time won popularity.

It had been his aim, because it was his understanding of the Divine will, first to qualify his flock to be a magnet, by feeding them with the "bread" and "strong meat," or, if necessary, with the "milk"; and later, but not until then, specifically to feed the thousands who might be attracted by the "loaves and fishes." The words: "Lovest thou me? Then feed my sheep," were constantly ringing in his ears.

Of course Ernest Radcliffe was not exempt from criticism. Mrs. Hull, in talking over "the new minister" when she called informally on Mrs. Langley, said:

"Yes, our minister is very earnest, very earnest

indeed; but, do you know, I fear he is going to lack tact in the pulpit; and it is odd too, for he seems to have a good deal of tact in company. Really he is very winning, socially. But then he is young yet, and I believe this is his first charge."

"Indeed!" murmured Mrs. Langley. "My daughters are very enthusiastic over him. They say he is simply grand; but you know I cannot get out much to church, so I have not heard him at all yet. But I did enjoy his call very much." Mrs. Langley was an invalid and appreciated calls.

"Well, anyway," Mrs. Hall continued, "he drove away the outsiders at first;" but her fidelity to truth obliged her to add, "though they do come better now." Mrs. Hall was a good member, and did not mean to be critical; but her idea of a preacher's mission differed from that of Ernest Radcliffe.

The latter, happily, was altogether unconscious of being discussed, and went on with his plans for Milston Center and Milston, as if the work had been committed to his especial charge.

On this particular night, however, Ernest Radcliffe was not thinking exclusively of his own plans of work. He was, on the contrary, thinking of another's plans of work; and, if the truth was to be told, those of Miss Olway.

"It is wonderful what an interest she has aroused among the young people at Milston, and what a sacrifice she is making. It must, indeed, have been a sacrifice to begin such a work, when she had to leave her delightful home in the city where, no doubt, she had already more work on hand than most people, and come to Milston through all

weathers to teach a class of ignorant, and, in some cases, uncouth youths, and set them to work for one another. But to live, for her, means to sacrifice. I was looking at her then from an outsider's standpoint," he added. Then he thought of her voice, and enjoyed again, in memory, the effect of its marvelous sweetness. "She is a rare soul!" he meditated; then, by a sudden reversion of thought, Vina's speech at the table occurred to him. "Her manner, or something!" he said. Why did that remind him of the scene at the Night-shades? He shuddered. "No! it could not be; yet there is a strange likeness." He tried to shake it off. It was unnecessary to make such inferences; and it was very painful. He would at least wait until he could make further inquiries. Still, the thought troubled him, and he determined to make a study of the case.

When he reached home he found a letter addressed to him in a plain, legible hand. It was from James Blake, giving thanks for the help he had received in a recent conversation, and saying that the way now was clear, and his duty plain.

"Good! the dear fellow is going to make an uncommon man if he is encouraged; it is an opportunity to be able to assist him a little. I must call over there to-morrow."

CHAPTER VI.

PASTORAL WORK.

His thoughts were as a pyramid up-piled,
On whose far top an angel stood and smiled,
Yet in his heart was he a simple child.
—*Laman Blanchard.*

THE next day, although his duties crowded upon him, Mr. Radcliffe found time to fulfill the obligation which he had laid upon himself.

No one was at home but Mrs. Blake. She, however, was overjoyed to see him.

"You are so kind to be interested in my son," she began.

"Oh, no; not kind, Mrs. Blake, only wise to see my privilege," he answered, with a genial smile, as he took the rocker which she drew up for him.

"I mean to take as much pains as you have. Not many ministers," she added, with emphasis, when she saw that he was about to interpose, "would have offered to do all that you have done."

"If you talk like that I shall begin to think myself quite a hero," he returned, laughing; then added, more soberly: "I have already written to secure the scholarship, and I came over to-day to congratulate you on the decision your son has made. He has the genuine 'stuff' in him, as we college men used to say, but it needs the chance for cultivation, and I am glad——"

Mrs. Blake could not wait for him to finish. "That is just what I always said. I have told John so again and again; but John, you know," and her voice softened, "has been over-anxious since our money trouble. He was sometimes a little too cautious, I thought—I mean for his own comfort. But now he is real resigned, and thinks perhaps there is a providence in it, since you approve so heartily."

Mrs. Blake had great charity for her husband, and bore all his "worrying" with abundant cheerfulness. She was fairly beaming with pride and joy to-day, and she felt perfectly justified in it.

"Yes; James is a good lad," she continued; "he is serious—never a cloud about the house—not that; but he always—from a child—looked at the sober side of things. I did fear once," she confessed in a lower tone, "that perhaps he would be too serious for this world; but he outgrew that."

"I think he might begin immediately, at least with the spring term," suggested Mr. Radcliffe, with a rising inflection on the last word.

"Yes; he is very anxious to commence, since he has decided," she replied. "Oh, how we shall miss him!" The mother weakness came out now, though she seemed not to have thought of herself before.

"True," said he, sympathetically. "But think of the pleasure when he comes home again." There was an undertone in his last words, as if they held a part of his own personal experience. "It is hard, but it is sweet. I suppose the ruggedness of the road here will make it all the sweeter there," he added, with a thoughtful look out of the window.

James and his father were off with a load of lumber, and did not return before Mr. Radcliffe had to leave; but the minister left his words of advice and encouragement with the mother, and went away feeling glad that he could participate in her joy.

Ernest Radcliffe's interest in the Milston people took him over that way quite often—not to the neglect of the work at Milston Center, but to the chagrin, it was said, of a few young women who were desirous of seeing more of the popular young pastor.

"There is a young lady who comes there from the city—so I have heard—every week, to teach a Bible class, or something. She comes with Vina Parkes. Charlie says she is awfully sweet,—no; he didn't say that either," she continued, wrinkling her forehead, as if it was quite essential to recall exactly the expression that was used. "Oh, I have it now, 'awfully lovely, and really a beauty sometimes.' But I believe he just said it to bother me. He went over there one night, you know, to the Bible class, because he had heard James Blake talk so much about it."

This was what Nellie Williams was saying to Maud Cummings that same afternoon, as the two sat chatting over their crochet-work.

"And so you think she is the one?" asked Maud.

"Well; I thought perhaps, for Charlie said to mamma, when he knew I was listening, that he thought Mr. Radcliffe was just fine; and that Miss Olway, as he called her, was about the sweetest girl he had ever seen, and in his opinion Mr. Radcliffe and she would make a pretty 'swell' match, and he

guessed Mr. Radcliffe though so too, if he had eyes like other men."

"But, see here, Nellie; do you know I heard the other day that he was engaged anyway, before he came here. I thought it was such a shame to get up such a story as that, I would not believe it."

"There he comes now, from that way too. See, Maud! To-day is Saturday, isn't it? They say she goes home again every Saturday."

"Yes; that is he," assented Maud, as the two girls stood at the window, peering out anxiously. "I wonder what he will preach about to-morrow? I declare, do you know sometimes I feel afraid to go to church now. He says things in such a way as if he was talking right to you, you know; and it sometimes makes me feel so mean about little things I have done, that I feel just as if I wanted to throw everything up, and begin all over—being good, I mean."

"Yes," said Nellie, looking at her friend, "so do I; but the next minute I think how grand he looked when he said it."

"So do I!" responded Maud, with a leap of sympathy, such as starts between congenial friends when they suddenly find some new experience in common.

Mr. Radcliffe was riding along blissfully unconcerned about what the young feminine portion of his congregation thought of him personally.

As to there being any doubt that the spiritual interests of Milston drew him thither, he had not the first hint until, on this same night, the lady with whom he boarded, together with several others, all

single men, said to him after supper was over, when the others had gone:

"You have quite an interest in Milston?"

"Yes," he answered with animation, "there is quite an interest there; but it is not due to my efforts alone. A young woman——" and he was going on, but she broke in, with a smile:

"Yes, I have heard of the young woman. We have some young women here who are interested in her. They have even called and asked me about her; but I told them I did not know anything about her. You never said anything about her, nor any young women, in fact." Here she broke forth into a laugh which was intended to be sympathetic.

Ernest Radcliffe's eyes were suddenly opened. While he had never acknowledged to himself that this young woman had any particular attraction for him, others had taken notice and had probably set him down as a devoted lover rather than a devoted pastor. Yet he could not be indignant any more than he could be amused; but, with a queer look, he very soon went to his study, somewhat unusual for him, as he generally had a cordial chat with his landlady instead of going directly to his work.

A fuller revelation dawned upon him that night, but the fulfillment of its promise was postponed, for a series of reasons which took shape and coloring from the circumstances under which he was placed.

But whatever may have been the misunderstanding elsewhere, to Mrs. Parkes, at least, the minister's visits seemed very kind and helpful; and if she was concerned for anything aside from her personal interests, it was for the pastor's cause.

At present, however, the chief desire of Mrs. Parkes, next to the wish for Celia's return, was that she might live to see Vina graduate, and afterward find a good, safe position to teach, where she would be under the immediate care of Eunice or Mrs. Olway. She felt that her own health was rather uncertain, as she had not been well for some time back. At last she secretly consulted a physician, who did not give much encouragement. This unpleasant fact she succeeded in concealing from Vina, but Eunice insisted that Mrs. Parkes should have treatment, and furnished the required means.

Vina had already entered upon her last year in the high school, and had passed through the earlier stages of her preparation with a brilliancy that gave her a sort of eclat among her fellows.

She took her compliments, however, with becoming modesty, never appearing to claim a favor because of her attainments, although she might have received it for the asking; for she was a favorite with her teachers. Moreover, her manner was unobtrusive and naturally winning, especially with the young, and therefore her superiority did not make her, as it otherwise would, the disliked rival of her fellow-aspirants.

But while she was acquainted with many she had few, if any, intimates. Her nature did not demand confidential friends to whom she could pour out the depths of her heart; not that she was incapable of warm friendship, but she could live very agreeably on the surface with most people.

"Oh! I like them all," she would say when questioned as to who was her best friend among the

girls. If she was pressed, she would answer with a mischievous smile, "I don't know." Were the boys mentioned, she would speak kindly of some, and laughingly criticise others. As to Miss Olway, Vina really loved her; and, although consciously unable to comprehend her benefactor, she gave her the more reverence.

When Dora once suddenly asked, "Vina, which do you love best, Auntie Eunie or grandma?" and would not be evaded, Vina had to confess:

"Dody, I don't know. When we go to Milston, I love Aunt Eunice most; but when you and Holly go to bed at night, it is grandma." But she could not explain it, except by a funny little fairy story, which succeeded in making Dora forget her question.

The children were accustomed to frequently inquire into the present *status* of family affection. Sometimes Dora loved grandma a "hundred pounds," and Aunt Eunice a "hundred and one," or *vice versa*. Mamma and papa never went above the even hundred. Hollis, however, loved them "all together" "two hundred pounds"; but papa, he "o' course loved one hundred all by hisself." He should be "like papa" himself, some day.

Vina's hour with Dora and Hollis had come to be a fixed arrangement in the household. The children were greatly disappointed whenever an exception occurred, and Vina herself felt that something was lacking. Who knows what the constant companionship of children may do toward molding a filial and loving character?

Not long after Vina had started on her last school

year, Mrs. Parkes rented a part of her house, in order to bring in an extra sum, and also for the comfort of "having somebody in the house to speak to," when she grew lonesome. But she found, after all, that her neighbors were not an absolute safeguard against "the blues."

"The blues" was a phrase by which she characterized the times when she wondered and wondered what had become of Celia; when she tried to think how she had done a "wrong to the child to make her turn out so," for she had come to the conclusion that some way she had been to blame. She learned this, not from any open suggestion that had been made to her, but inferentially from the character and life of Miss Olway.

"Yes; I see now, I didn't do my duty by Celia. I never did my duty to anybody," she once said, while the tears of sorrow ran down her cheeks.

This habit of talking aloud to herself was easily acquired by being alone in the house.

"I was her mother, and I ought to have watched more, and talked more, about God and religion. But I did talk sometimes; yes, I remember. No; talking would not do it; it was living, and I did not do that. I did not know how, then. O God, have mercy upon me, and bring her home; oh, bring her back, O God, and help me to do as I ought to do now to them who are near me. Then maybe thou wilt see that I mean it, and wilt make it right again some way."

After such outpourings as these, she always felt a peace through the sense of pardon, and a faint hope that after all it would come out right in the

end. With this assurance she would throw off those "wicked blues," and think about doing something "a little extra" against the time of the girl's coming; or perhaps she would think about her neighbors, saying to herself, "I guess I will run out and make a call if somebody does not drop in pretty quick."

She had commenced to attend the Bible-class with the girls of late, and was becoming greatly interested in studying the lessons. Miss Olway finally persuaded her to take a class in Sunday-school, and this, together with the reading which she did, occupied the most of her spare time.

Mr. Radcliffe used to bring books to her, and talk them over with her afterward. In fact, he started a reading circle in the neighborhood. Its meetings were held occasionally on an afternoon, and Mr. Radcliffe planned to be present just often enough to keep them aware of his interest. He was almost surprised to note how enthusiastic all seemed to be over the circle.

"Yet why am I surprised that people with capacities and hungerings should eagerly devour the supplies which those endowments crave!" he asked himself. "Bodily powers increase with use, why not mental?"

It was not long after he came to Milston, before Mr. Radcliffe saw that there ought to be a church edifice there. The work demanded it. To bring this about must be one of his aims; and many months had not passed before this same idea sprang up in other minds.

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth

speaketh." The suggestion was made through sermons, social calls, and ways we know not of; and the Milston people took it up as a proposition they had not "thought of before, but as worth considering."

A strong religious influence had come to the people, especially the younger ones. It did not come with a sudden sweep as a deluge, but quietly and gradually like the rising tide. Yet its power was no less great; and as Ernest Radcliffe was meditating one evening before his window, shadowy forms were before him, and the dominant one of them all had the proportions of a church.

It was not strange that Mrs. Parkes too had an interest in the new enterprise. She and Mr. Radcliffe conversed freely on the subject, and she confided to her pastor her intention to "help it along" all she could. A definite plan occurred to her, but she did not divulge it until after consultation with Miss Olway. But as the latter heartily approved of the scheme, the carrying out of the same not only served to employ the time Mrs. Parkes could spare from her sewing, but also helped to spread over Milston that pleasant excitement which always attends a common social interest. The plan was as follows: She would invite the women, old and young, to a sewing circle at her house some afternoon, asking them to bring refreshments; the men would be invited to come to supper and spend the evening. While the women were chatting over their work she would give them her ideas and arouse them to the desire to decide upon some plan for the church that would "astound and nettle the

men folks," and eventually force them to action in order to "keep up their end" of reputation.

When the occasion came, Mrs. Parkes expressed herself as sure that the men would help if Mr. Radcliffe, as she knew he would, gave his sanction to the plan; they would not depend upon raising the money by "sewing bees" and "fairs" alone, but each member of every family should be requested to give an amount of money, whether small or great, in the name of some friend or relative who had died, thus erecting a common monument to the memory of their departed loved ones; and, moreover, that each man or woman who felt that he or she had neglected a clear duty in some particular, and was troubled by it, should also measure his or her regret by a self-denial gift.

As an inducement to a woman's fund, Mrs. Parkes gave them the delightful information that some one had already pledged a gift of five hundred dollars, as a "nest egg." She put the final touch to her argument by saying:

"Who knows what the men will do, if the women will only start?"

Within the last year, Mrs. Parkes had become intensely interested in all religious enterprises, and even gave very liberally because of her self-denial. She seemed to have one great aim—to atone for some former deficiency; and this, doubtless, gave coloring to her "plan." She once said as much to Mr. Radcliffe. He was greatly surprised when she told him of the five hundred dollars. It was Miss Olway's gift, and Mrs. Parkes disclosed the fact before she thought.

"Eunice will be very sorry," she added, after the disclosure. "What ails me?"

"It shall remain a secret, as it is Miss Olway's wish," he replied. "But it is very noble of her."

"Noble! of course it's noble; but that's only another way of spelling 'Eunice.'"

"True!" he answered, amused at her saying.

In fact, Miss Olway hesitated some time before deciding to use the money in this way.

"You know, mother, five hundred dollars seemed so much at first for my singing!" Eunice had always sung in her own church freely and gladly; but after other choirs had sought her, and she had refused a generous salary, her own people offered her the above-named sum a year. She would have refused that, but her mothar said: "You owe everything that is in your voice, money and all, to the Master. You can use the money more wisely, perhaps, than they." And this had decided her. Then they had to consider *how* the money should be used.

"There is the church at Milston—but then, Vina graduates from the high school in June, and I have been thinking about her going to college.

"Yes; I know," responded her mother; "but I think, dear, that it will be better for Vina to teach, or do something for herself for a year or two.

"It seems just so to me, mother. Then it shall go to the church at Milston."

So this was the way Mrs. Parkes' plan was to have such a substantial aid.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MISSIONARY TEA.

When love is strong
It never tarries to take heed,
Or know if its return exceed
Its gift ; in its sweet haste no greed,
No strifes belong.

H. H.

WHILE a healthful excitement was quickening the sluggish blood of country veins, a sensation of the feverish, baneful sort was appealing to the already sated appetite of an obtrusive element of humanity, in a certain large city, a good many miles from Milston. To be sure, it was only "another crime," worked up into a new combination of horrors, by the reporters for the sensational press. Heartless as it may sound, it was only another crime, a small dark speck in that teeming cesspool of wickedness, darkest New York. Yet there were peculiarities about this, which remained after the first glaring colors had been erased by lapse of time.

The crime was a murder, and it was caused by a woman ; but the woman, whose husband had been shot by her avowed lover, acted a part to save her own life, and then played treason at the right time to hand the criminal over to the police. A few

days later, the man escaped from prison, and could not be tracked; neither could the woman.

"Another horrible thing!" said Mrs. Garton Olway to her husband, as she laid aside a New York daily paper. It was early evening, and Garton was looking over several other dailies, with the discriminating eye of an editor.

He did not appear to hear her, until she added:

"I pity the woman if she ever encounters him again!"

"Upon whom are you lavishing all that expensive pity?" asked the husband, looking up lovingly at his wife.

"Oh, Garton! here I have been talking——"

"At least two minutes."

"Five, I am sure," she insisted, rising and playfully pinching his ears, "and all you heard was the word 'pity.' Editors don't have to be in their dens to be undisturbed."

"By angels coming unawares, and tweaking their ears," he supplemented, throwing down his papers, and smiling at her. "I am anxious to entertain such visitors when I have the opportunity. It is not often they come fluttering into my den, and brushing their wings against my pen and scissors. They are afraid of being stabbed or cut in two, I guess, or else they are not so nimble as the sylphs in 'Rape of the Lock.' You remember?"

"Oh, yes!" she answered. "I shall never forget the evening you read that to me. You seemed to take the part of the fairies so devotedly."

"Don't I do it just as devotedly now, you little siren?" he broke in.

"Oh, but Garton!" she replied, "you were a perfect sylph or brownie that night. Indeed I simply could not count you, you were so many; you fairly swarmed about me! Now you are a man, just as devoted of course, but a great big human man, so big that you almost frighten me sometimes."

Garton burst into the heartiest peal of laughter the dining-room walls had witnessed in some time. It had the reverberations of cumulative mirth. He lifted her upon his knee, and looked at her as one would at an exquisite wax doll that had suddenly spoken an epigram. Then shaking her playfully, he said:

"Wifie! the beauty has turned the wit. That was the archest piece of drollery I ever heard," and his face flushed with love's admiration.

Then changing his tone he added: "Precious little girl! I have turned out very human, I should say. Life is not quite such a fairy tale as we once so fondly imagined, is it dear? But it is sweeter far to me than my dream ever was—the reality, I mean."

"I guess it is," she answered, soberly. "And I believe I have found out that it is not less sweet when life is not all taken up with style and company if——"

He pressed her to his bosom, and silenced her lips with his own. There was also a strange soft light in his eyes.

"Well, dearie, I must run down to the office awhile to give orders to the men, and see that all is right," Garton said, after a few moments. "You

do not expect any callers to-night, eh? Then why not step in and see mother a minute until I come back?"

"That reminds me I must talk it over with mother and Eunice. They want to have a missionary tea here, and I told them I would open all our rooms too, and make a real thing of it."

"That is right, wifie. Was not mother pleased, though?" he asked, with evident pleasure.

"Well, you seem to be glad too, Garton. I did not know how you would like a missionary tea, with all those church people here—and a program and all."

"When mother is president?" he queried, with surprise.

"Of course! I did not think of that."

"Don't I always submit gracefully to five o'clock teas and receptions for you?" he asked, mischievously.

"But they are all cultured people," she remonstrated, intimating that the church tea would not bring a select company.

"All?" he responded, with a peculiar emphasis. "'A man's a man for a' that,' you know."

"To be sure. I did not mean that; but literary men like you——"

"Should be catholic and humble," he interpolated, finishing her sentence for her, as he stepped into the hall. "Arrange it all, dear, with your best skill, and see what an adherent I shall be."

"Garton always makes fun of my parties, although he never objects. But he seemed really to approve of this. I wonder if he would have liked these

things better all along." It was apparently a new idea to her.

"If any one comes to-night, I shall not be in," she said to Mollie, the maid, before going into the other part of the house.

She found Vina with Eunice and her mother in the private sitting room. There were a few coals glowing on the grate, for the air was chill and gave a cheeriness to the evening group. Samson, the large Maltese cat, was on the sofa, purring, under the mesmeric influence of Vina's strokes. Eunice sat at the table writing, and Mrs. Olway was hemming what looked like a child's garment.

"Why, Lena, my dear!" the latter said, looking up, brightly; "here is just the place for you." She reached out for a softly cushioned willow rocker near by. "See! it has been waiting for you."

"Yes, mother, this is the cosy, wee chair," Lena said, snuggling her shapely figure in its depths, and revealing one daintily slippered foot.

"Garton has just gone down to the office, and I thought I would come in and talk over the tea to-night, if you have nothing important on hand."

"The ladies are just delighted about having the house all open. I think we will have a crowd; but you will not mind?" She spoke a little hesitatingly.

"Oh, certainly not! Do you know I believe Garton is really pleased over it, and I think he intends to be here in the evening."

Eunice said: "How delightful!" and her mother's eyes shone.

Then Vina interjected: "How some of those peo-

ple will admire your beautiful curios and things. It will be as good as the Metropolitan to them." She appeared to be amused by the thought; but her notion of the Metropolitan had been gained by reading.

Vina had a keen appreciation of the taste and bric-a-brac displayed on the other side of the house.

"Would you need to have all my silver?" asked Lena.

"I had not thought of that," Eunice answered, inwardly surprised that Lena should offer it. "No, I think not. What do you say, mother?"

"Just as you two think about those things. It will not make any difference. Yet on the whole, it might be better not to make too great a display. But it is good of you to offer it, Lena. I know how you prize your silver."

"Garton asked me to plan my prettiest in a way that makes me want to use the best I have. So you may use anything I have that you like."

"Thank you, sister; it is very kind and unselfish," said Eunice, with warmth; for she knew that it was something of a trial to Lena to open her treasures to such ordinary inspection.

She continued: "I think, as mother says, it would be better not to bring out too much. It might dazzle them you know, and besides, some harm might come to your things with so many here. And then," she said, smiling, "we do not want to distract their minds from missions too much, either, you know."

She did not wish Lena to see how absurd it appeared to her that people who were interested in

missions should not be at all familiar with fine pictures and cut-glass. Some of their most devoted members were wealthy and cultured women. So she went on without pausing:

"I think we had better seat them for refreshments in your dining room. Yours accommodates so many more chairs. Then, Lena, you arrange the center-table to your taste, not too gorgeous, but dainty and artistic, just as you always have it for ordinary company. You are such an adept at that, you know; you can make a perfect bower out of the commonest flowers and vines."

"What will you do for waiters? Use the servants."

"No, we have some young girls who are always willing to do such work. Vina is going to be one of the waiters."

"We are to dress in colors, and wear pretty white aprons and caps," remarked Vina, giving Samson an extra patting on the back, which resulted in a more sonorous purr, supplemented by a vigorous sneeze.

"About the program?" queried Lena.

"That will begin at eight o'clock," answered Mrs. Olway, "and will occupy about an hour. There will be music; and Dr. Greene is to make a short address, and Vina will give a recitation."

"Indeed!" said Lena, looking at Vina; "and does Eunice sing?"

"Once," Mrs. Olway replied; "but Eunice is so busy, you know. It is almost too bad to ask her for that, but the ladies insisted."

"I have a compliment for Eunice," Lena ejaculated. "Mr. Winthrop—and he is quite a judge of

music, you know—said that the quality of my sister's voice is rare. 'Her singing voice, as compared with her speaking voice,' he said, 'is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.' Now, wasn't that complimentary? I told him I would tell you, although he begged me not to mention his name. He appears to be a warm admirer of my sister-in-law," she added, looking bewitchingly mischievous. "By the way, mother, may I ask a few of my friends on Thursday night? Mr. Winthrop seemed so interested when I mentioned the tea, that I asked him to come, jokingly you know; but he took it seriously and said he would be delighted. I thought afterward that perhaps I had done wrong, but I was trapped before I knew it."

She waited for Mrs. Olway to reply.

"Certainly, Lena; any of your friends. We shall be glad of their presence and interest. It may open the eyes of some," she added to herself.

"Of course I shall be obliged to ask two or three others. It would look so odd, having Richard alone," Lena returned, with a bright smile.

Richard Winthrop was a rising young lawyer, who belonged to one of the most aristocratic families in the city. As a family, the Winthrops were not wealthy, but had been prominent in public life. They would be numbered among the elite—the favored "four hundred." Richard's grandfather had been a senator, and one of his ancestors a governor, and it was thought by his intimate friends that Richard himself had political ambitions. But he had a stainless reputation, and most people would have been glad to see such an honor-

able young man in a responsible position of State. He was also a scholar and quite a musical critic, as Lena intimated; in short, a polished gentleman, whose fastidious tastes revealed the instincts of genuine refinement. His ancestral church was the Episcopalian, but his own religious views, apart from his love of the beautiful in nature and art, were those of the humanitarian, with a natural drift toward optimism. He was in danger of espousing the "worship of humanity," rather than falling into the contempt of mankind, which is the curse of the misanthrope.

Thursday was one of those beautiful autumn days, when rich, mellow colors in tree and vine greet the eye soothingly, even in the city, and the air is intoxicating, as if a quaff of some fine old vintage had quickened the spiritualized senses.

A few of the women came early in order to consult the president about some prospective work, and to be on hand if there was anything to be done, as there often is at the last minute. But at five o'clock, people fairly streamed into the halls.

Vina had never before been so important a personage amid the pleasant excitements of a social occasion. Now she was the center of a throng of questioning girls, all in gay-colored gowns and bedecked with caps and aprons, ready to flit about like butterflies, when the proper time came. And very attractive they looked, as they swarmed before their hive, the dining room, where among the flowers that bloomed on the table, or hovered in the secluded niches beneath festoons of smilax, any bee

might have been tempted to go in search of dewy nectar.

Mrs. Olway, the president of the society, was a noble-looking woman, as she moved from one group to another, with genial dignity. There was something about her face, and especially in her large hazel eyes, that immediately won all hearts, old and young; and when the charm of her voice was added, she might command and all would obey.

Mrs. Garton Olway was a perfect hostess by nature and training, and now that she was entertaining for missions, she was just as charmingly gracious as she could have been at any high tea or aristocratic reception.

Eunice was everywhere by turn; now speaking to an elderly gentleman who could not "hear much," but liked to "watch the young," and now encircled by a group of little girls, who clasped her waist, or held her hand with adoring eagerness. All loved her, and in truth, it was a pleasure to watch her fine womanly figure move in and out, untangling, as it were, the confused mass of forms, and re-combining them into congenial groups.

"Her face speaks more than most young persons ever say," said one middle-aged gentleman to another, after Eunice had passed them with a word.

"Yes; she has her mother's face, only less mature."

"I believe you are right, but I had not thought of it before."

Eunice had a way of appearing to be interested in every one. She was an attentive listener, and always said the right thing at the right time. It was not

that she had so much tact, but that she was always true to the promptings of sympathy. Thus she never offended by harshness or indelicacy.

Garton appeared before the programme began, and added to the pleasure of the gentlemen. He felt sorry for men who were entertained where there was no host. It seemed to him that they never could feel quite at ease. Garton himself was a favorite with the ladies, notwithstanding the fact, and perhaps for the very reason, that he paid most attention to his own sex.

Lena had previously warned her husband that she had invited Mr. Winthrop and a few others, so that he might be aware of his duty toward them. He was greatly amused when she told him how Mr. Winthrop had come to be invited, and particularly when she said:

"I think Eunice has something to do with his coming. I really believe she is the attraction, and I hope you will encourage it. Think how lovely such a thing would be!"

"Such a thing as Richard?" he asked, innocently.

"You know what I mean; and if only Eunice would fall in love once, she would not use herself up so over missions and Sunday-schools. Now, Garton, if you don't see that they get together at the tea, I shall!"

It was quite unpremeditated, however, that Garton formally presented Mr. Winthrop to his mother, and later to Eunice.

"I have had the honor of meeting Miss Olway before," he said, and then it flashed across Garton what his wife had wished.

"I will politely leave them soon," he said to himself, thinking how obedient he was.

He got away very easily, for Mr. Winthrop was so preoccupied that he hardly noticed Garton after the introduction.

"I don't know but there is something in it. Women see so straight," he mentally commented, as he made his way toward his objective point.

Meanwhile Mr. Winthrop and Eunice were conversing with mutual interest. Eunice blushed slightly at first, as Lena's words occurred to her; but she was soon herself again, and really enjoyed what Mr. Winthrop was saying on entirely impersonal grounds. Eunice could not be self-conscious long at a time, for she was too whole-souled.

They had drifted into the subject of art, as they were looking at one of Millet's pictures, which Richard Winthrop recognized.

"I have no idea of real art," said Eunice, "though I enjoy some pictures. I remember one that I saw in the Metropolitan, 'The Snowstorm,' I think it was called. I do not recall the artist. There were the poor, frightened sheep, huddled together in the blinding snowstorm, and you could almost hear the wolves howling. The shepherd had deserted them!" There was a softness in her eyes, and her lips quivered with emotion.

"Like the trembling of a lute," Richard Winthrop thought, as he looked at her with admiration. "Yes, I remember that picture," he said, aloud; "but I did not catch your impression. I see you have the true appreciation. Such an enjoyment is beyond me."

No; there was no mistaking him. He was not making fun of her.

"I have no appreciation at all! It is only that a picture sometimes teaches me some beautiful truth. I am impressed more with that than with the skill of the artist."

"That is where you have the true idea of art, and of appreciating it," he rejoined. "It is the same with music. Those who feel a truth, really understand music, while those who merely hear sounds, have not even a conception of it."

"I see the force of that," she answered, earnestly. "Music appeals to me more than painting."

Just then they were hushed by some one trying to silence the hum of voices, and when it was comparatively quiet, Eunice heard her mother announcing the programme.

"There will be opening prayer—our pastor."

After the prayer, Eunice felt a trifle uneasy. She just remembered that she had to sing, and to assist about one or two other matters relating to the entertainment; but she was not needed until after the address. However, after Lena's remarks, she felt embarrassed about excusing herself on the ground that she was to take part. But she could not find any other excuse that seemed adequate, and before she had determined what to say, a musical number was announced, a piano solo, and they both listened in silence. As it concluded, he remarked:

"Shall you favor us to-night?"

This was her opportunity.

"Yes, I have a little part, and for that reason, I

am obliged to excuse myself. Let me take you to my sister. There! she sees you."

So saying she led the way to Lena, who was moving about quietly, on duty as hostess. The latter had evidently not intended to interrupt them, but of course greeted Mr. Winthrop with cordial grace, as Eunice explained that she must go.

"I saw you chatting so agreeably, that I did not have the heart to disturb you," Lena said, as soon as Eunice left them.

"Your sister is very interesting, to speak moderately," he answered, frankly avowing his admiration.

"You really think so?" she asked, archly. She had known him ever since he was a boy, as their families lived side by side. "Did she tell you about the Bible-class at Milston, or the work in the city missions?"

"Does she do all that?" he inquired, with surprise.

"Oh, that is not a quarter!" she answered, laughing. "But of course she would not speak of it; Eunice never lets her right hand know what her left hand does."

There had been a short intermission between the numbers, but now a reading was announced. It was a spicy *résumé* of the latest missionary news from various fields, and ended with a suggestion of the possibilties that might be realized, if only more funds and workers could be had.

Mrs. Olway made a remark now and then in a low whisper. They were standing in a remote corner—and quite unobserved.

More music followed from the violin, with piano accompaniment. Then came the address. It was a short, stirring appeal for missions, based upon his clearest-cut argument, and delivered with the enthusiasm which Dr. Greene always put into his oratorical efforts.

Mr. Winthrop had never heard him before. He really thought him a very effective speaker, though he could not understand the need of so much enthusiasm, except that from an artistic point of view it certainly made a better speech.

It was then that Eunice sang. The song was sacred, and just suited to her voice. It was from an oratorio; but coming as it did after the stirring address, its effect upon the audience was wonderful. Eunice sang it from the depth of her heart, and the music seem to thrill with the missionary spirit. The strains of the *finale* were prophetic of the time when "the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

When the sounds ceased, there was a subdued hush, and many a heart that had become almost discouraged by the wayside bounded with new hope.

Richard Winthrop was astonished and silenced. He had not expected to be affected in this way. He was almost inclined to believe that it was all coming true, and that it was fitting that we should be in earnest. Indeed, he could not separate himself from the spell of the combined influence—the talk with Eunice, the address, and now Eunice's song.

"It was marvelous—glorious!" he found himself saying to his hostess.

Mrs. Garton Olway too was impressed, and answered simply, "Yes, Eunice puts her whole soul into whatever she sings."

Vina's recitation next demanded attention.

"She is such a bright little thing," one of the members remarked afterward.

The piece was pathetic, disclosing the needs of a poor heathen family, and their groping after light, which came at last, to the relief of the listeners. For the scene was as vivid as life, as might be expected by those who knew Vina's marvelous power of impersonation.

"That little girl is Eunice's *protégé*, and a wonderfully clever child. It is really quite remarkable," said Mrs. Garton Olway to Mr. Winthrop.

He asked one or two interested questions, but was not so communicative as was his wont with her.

"He is surely falling in love with Eunice!" Lena thought, forgiving his unusual silence.

The collection plates were now passed, and they had never returned to the stand more heavily laden than on that night. Richard Winthrop felt glad of some avenue of relief, and put in a generous contribution.

The last number was a hymn, in which all were invited to join, and then the murmuring of voices became general. The flocks of gay creatures, known as the "waiters," disappeared behind scenes, and a gradual movement toward the dining room ensued.

The guests had to enter in sections, as all could not be seated at once; but the hostesses made

themselves so agreeable to all, that the transition to and from the dining hall produced a pleasant circulation of sociability.

Mr. Winthrop saw Eunice only a few moments again before he took his leave, for she had been so occupied in entertaining others, especially the strangers who had been induced to come, but who evidently were not accustomed to being entertained so gracefully.

One of these drew from her much pity, mingled with amusement. Eunice felt as if she was trying to make acquaintance with one of Dicken's characters—a queer, dwarfish, bobbing Miss June, whom nobody appeared to know. She was so small and insignificant-appearing that, paradoxical as it may seem, every one noticed her, and wondered who she might be.

"Certainly not a friend of the Olways, for Eunice asked me about her," said one.

"What a fussy, jealous-eyed little thing she is," murmured another, a young woman who was noted for bluntness; "she is either morose, or stupidly conceited. I tried to talk to her, but she winked and hesitated so I feared I should laugh in her face."

"Hush!" said her companion, but added afterward, with restrained laughter, "Jane, you are too voluble with adjectives."

In truth, Eunice was not anxious to meet Mr. Winthrop after her solo. She did not expect him to compliment her—she read him too clearly for that; but she felt that it might be embarrassing. However, she did not deliberately evade Lena's efforts

to bring them together again. Indeed, she did not even perceive that Lena was making an effort.

Mr. Winthrop had paid his addresses to Mrs. Olway, and now stood, hat in hand with Lena and Eunice, in the broad hall, which at that time was almost deserted.

"You have made the evening so delightful," he was saying, looking at both, "that I had entirely forgotten another engagement."

Then with a few more words, he had bidden them good-night and was gone.

"What a perfect gentleman he is," said Lena, without looking at Eunice. "Not a hint of a dude, but only of inborn gentility," she went on. "I am prouder of him every day."

Some one else came up to say good-night, and when they had begun to go, they went as they had come—"in streams."

"It has been a great success," was the general verdict.

"Of course it would be, for the Olways are so lovely," declared Mrs. Josiah Browne.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIFE AT MILSTON.

Blessed are the missionaries of cheerfulness.
—*Lydia Maria Child.*

LIFE still goes on in the same old way, even after a great vacancy has occurred in the home, either because of the death of some loved one or because a dear one has gone away, not so very far perhaps, but still gone out into a new life from which he will never return to the old life, just as it was before. The daily round of duties does not change much. A few new cares are added, as the old ones slip off; but there is a sameness about the course of humble, domestic life which sometimes seems the persistency of a cruel taskmaster, but oftener proves to be the safety rope to which we cling when the great waves come so unexpectedly as to overwhelm us while we were seeking only the pleasure of a summer's day.

Mrs. Harriet Blake had been thinking on this wise as she sat by the window mending, after her work was done.

"James has been away now seven months and two weeks. How empty the house feels even yet! I wonder if I am sorry I encouraged him in it." But her heart quickly answered, "No!"

She remembered how keen her sorrow was when

she had kissed her boy over and over again a cheerful good-bye, filling up each minute with loving words of advice and warning, lest they should all "break down," and make James' going unbearable; how, when he had mounted the wagon with his father, and the trunk was on, and nothing was missing, the horse started of his own accord, because the poor father could not speak a word; and how, as they were passing out of the gate, James turned once more and waved his handkerchief, feigning cheerfulness.

That was a solemn time, and the heaviness that fell upon her heart as she shut the door alone, had never quite left her, but hung, as it were, a suspended weight which might fall with a recurring thought. But whatever sorrow might be within, she never allowed its gloom upon her face. Her expression was even now cheerful, although there was none to see; but she knew very well that it is the habitual look which remains, and the effect of an indulgent moment that appears unawares.

Her bosom swelled with pride as she thought of the advancement her boy was making.

"To be sure he is studying hard; but his constitution is good, and hard thinking will not hurt anyone if he has good, common sense about eating and sleeping. Then James is so certain of his work now. It is a comfort to have it settled, even if it is going to take a good deal of preparation."

As she skillfully drew the needle in and out, her mind turned upon the father, who had necessitated all this ingenuity of mending.

"He has worried less about the boy since he

came home last than ever before. After he gave up his being a farmer he has settled down. Poor father," she added, "it was a hard thing to give it up. But he found he was rowing against the stream. I saw that from the time James was a little boy."

John Blake just then came into the kitchen, and his heavy boots made a loud noise on the bare floor. He was always a heavy stepper.

"John plants his feet as he plants his corn—deep," she said to herself, smiling at her own joke.

But all his little foibles were dear to her, even his fretting.

It gave her a chance to be jubilant "not all for nothing either." She received her dearest joy from smoothing out the wrinkles on his brow, and making him say at last, with a smile, "Well, maybe it *will* come out right, Harriet. What would I do without you?"

Once she answered: "You would bear it alone, I suppose, whereas now you *bear* it with me." He did not see the pun, as she was sure he would not, so she enjoyed it by herself.

James did not take after his mother in seeing the funny side; but neither did he favor his father's habit of borrowing trouble.

To-day, when she heard her husband's step, Mrs. Blake threw down her work, and hurried as fast as she could to the kitchen. John might have a letter from James. Sure enough, he held it up as soon as she opened the door, and she almost ran to take it from his hand. It was directed to her this time. James took turns in addressing the envelopes,

although inside the letter always began, "Dear mother and father."

Tearing it open as eagerly as a young girl with a love letter, she began reading aloud, while John was wiping his hands on the crash towel:

"'I can picture you, mother, sitting by the window until you hear father, and then rushing out to get this, in which I could not disappoint you, even at the risk of a flunk (you know what that is). I am terribly busy now; but I could not study a mite until I wrote this letter.

"'Deep in logic now, and political economy. Like them pretty well, but mathematics is the best. That is simply grand. I could pore over problems forever, and not get tired—but they do not take me so long as other things: Latin, for instance; and Greek I never could endure, I know. George (my room-mate) showed me his Greek text the other day, and the very sight made me dizzy. Although, after all, it is no worse, if as bad, as German. But you remember, I used the English text in my German.

"'Chemistry is fun, especially the practical part in the laboratory. You recollect how I always liked to fuss around with jars and bottles; I used to play I had drugs and medicines in them. I was a great doctor in those days. I hope I shall make as good a one in reality.

"'George is writing home also since I began. You see the force of example. George is a good fellow; we get on finely; he is just the one for me. He wakes me up, you know, as you used to mother, by giving me a good talking to. I see now how

sadly I miss your words, mother, and your laugh; and I often feel even yet, that I ought to get ready to go out behind the team with father.'"

Here Harriet stopped a moment, looking up at her husband.

"I wish it could be so, as he says," said John. "I am lonesome with the team now."

"Not with Tom; not very lonesome. Tom talks so much, you would hardly have time," she replied, trying to put the best side out.

"Oh, yes; but go on, see what he says next."

She went on reading:

"'But I do not have much time to meditate, except on Sundays. Then we do just think. I have told you about our preacher, and how we spend Sundays, haven't I? Mr. Radcliffe sent a letter to our minister here, telling him very kindly about me, I am sure, from the splendid way he treats me. You know he is a new man, since last vacation, but Mr. Radcliffe happened to know him.

"'It is just like Mr. Radcliffe to start a reading circle there. Of course it is a splendid thing, and I know how you, mother, must enjoy it, and father too. It takes up your time, I hope, so you do not miss me so much. It is a God-send just now. But I shall have to look out or you will know more than I do, in spite of my going away, even in books. From what mother wrote, you must get pretty deep in history every evening. I wish it had been started while I was home.

"'Well, things are going on in the seminary very much as last term, except at the beginning of the year there are more new ones to get acquainted

with; but the professors are all old—I mean the same——' "

"Trust him to correct himself," inserted Mrs. Blake.

"How?" asked John, not understanding.

"Oh, he was afraid we would think the teachers were old, when he meant they were the same as last year."

"Oh, yes, James is truthful—truthful as the——" he seemed at a loss for a comparison.

"Moon?" suggested Harriet. "It always reflects the sun just the same at the proper angle, you know."

This appeared to satisfy him, and she read on.

"'——that were here last year. One has been married, and brought his wife—the chemistry professor.

"'By the way, I can finish here this year. Professor Todd assured me I could. Then there will be two years at least after that, and maybe three; but it will pay; I am sure it will, for I certainly believe that is my work. I am convinced more and more.

"'Now, mother, this is a short letter, I know; but I have told about everything. Do write soon, and tell me all about home, the farm, and the neighbors.

"'Is Mrs. Parkes still alone? And does Vinie come home as she used to? Tell me all about everybody, and yourselves especially.

"'I shall be home again Thanksgiving, remember!' "

"As if we could possibly forget it!" exclaimed

Mrs. Blake, as she ran her eyes over the sheet again. "What a comfort letters are!" she added with a smile. Then folding it up and rising at the same time, she exclaimed, "Why! I must be thinking about getting supper. It is later than I supposed. Shall you go to milk pretty soon?"

John Blake had been sitting with his hands on his knees, and now he leaned back in his chair, with a troubled look on his face.

She came near and stroked his forehead.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Oh, it is the same old query—will it pay, after all?"

"Now, John; you settled that long ago. Of course it will pay! Has it not paid already. He has hardly asked a cent from us."

"No, true," he answered; "he has not. It will probably turn out all right," he concluded, unwrinkling his forehead as he arose. "I will go to the stables now. Tom has likely brought the cattle up by this time." After a moment, he continued, beginning to scowl again, "There are Tom's wages!"

"Yes; but you had to have a man anyway, for a while, even if James had decided to be a farmer. You know you intended him to go to school a year or so, at all odds, and who knows what James may earn in the long vacation."

"I suppose it is so, Harriet; you always can set it straight, someway," and he took the pails off to the barn.

"It has to be straightened somehow," Harriet repeated to herself. "*He* will make the crooked

ways straight. I always liked that passage. It seems as if they always were needing to be straightened. Well!"

This was the nearest approach to a murmur, which she had indulged in for a long time, and she immediately added: "But it is a blessed work!" and she then set about getting supper as briskly as usual.

As she brought the dishes out, and put the kettle on, her thoughts recurred to the letter and its reference to the reading circle.

"It is a help in keeping us from getting too lonesome. How wonderful history is anyway! Going way back there before the dark ages, and then coming along down to now, as we are, and noticing things on the way, and doing it all in a few evenings. My! It is wonderful! It is just like the steam engines we have nowadays. Everything goes with a whizz—even our thinking. Then there is that reading in astronomy; that fairly takes me off my feet!"

As she went on meditating, she forgot what she was doing, and stood lost in thought before the window, from which she caught sight of the stars, that glittered faintly on the horizon. Her mind was framing an analogy between the courses of the stars and the threadings of history; and as the lights of history occurred to her mind, one by one —those fair names that remain for all time—the stars came out, and presently she seemed to see the radiance of a brighter path, the light that trails along the steps where *he* has trod, and it appeared the Milky Way. She stood transfixed with the

greatness of the thought; and if one could have seen her face, there would have been a grandeur about the dark features and large black eyes, that would never have been forgotten.

The kitchen door was thrown open, and the men's voices were heard.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Harriet Blake, recovering herself. "Here I have been away off in the heavens, and the supper not ready yet. I am as bad as Socrates! But they say his wife could bring him to!" and she smiled at this ghost of a comparison. "It is a shame, for undoubtedly John is hungry!" and she bustled about, as if she had never entertained any but the most practical, housewifely ideas.

"Supper ready?" shouted John, from the woodshed.

"In a minute," answered his wife.

While this scene was enacting at the Blake homestead, Mr. Radcliffe was driving toward Milston Center. He had made several calls, more or less in the interest of the "new church," which he hoped soon to see "fashioned out of more substantial material than dreams are made of," and was thinking: "There is one great surety of success—the young people have taken hold of it so energetically."

In truth a wonderful change had came over the character of the Milston youth; for many who had heretofore been regarded as indifferent were now the staunchest advocates of religion and improvement. They had grown to be steady farmers or mill operatives. Some had married, notably Ned

Brown and Jennie Doty, and settled down in a humble, but respectable way.

The Sunday-school and Bible-class had increased in numbers and interest to such an extent that, as Mr. Radcliffe declared, it was almost a church itself. This band of young students was a firm basis for the young people's society which was afterward organized, and proved, without doubt, to be the nucleus of the church which, a few years later, grew into noble proportions, and became a potent factor in evangelical work.

Milston was becoming more thickly settled. People began to see that it had a good, healthful location, near a railroad, and at a reasonable distance from the city. Therefore property increased in value, slowly to be sure, but owners took heart, and rejoiced that they had not "gone west after all." John Blake once admitted as much to his wife. Mrs. Parkes even profited by the change, for she now had as much sewing and more than she could take in, for she was not feeling so strong as formerly, and could not sit up as late as she had formerly done.

These thoughts were in Mr. Radcliffe's mind as he rode home, but his call upon Mrs. Parkes had put him in some anxiety on her account.

"I must persuade her not to take so much work," he thought.

On the following day Mrs. Parkes received a caller, Mrs. Doty, who came to the door with a bundle of work, saying:

"There is a dress I should like made over when you have time. I am not particular about it right away."

"You were one of my first customers, Mrs. Doty, so I shall do it for you, although I am very busy," Mrs. Parkes answered.

This occurred soon after Mrs. Parkes had arranged to sew for Miss Grant, and had begun to discover how many dresses a young lady needs, although she may not be strong, and "does not go out much."

Thus life went on in the country, enlivened now and then by such changes as naturally come to people who live "far from the madding crowd."

CHAPTER IX.

RIVALS.

Me too thy nobleness has taught
To master my despair;
The fountains of my hidden life
Are through thy friendship fair.
—*R. W. Emerson.*

A FEW days after the tea-party at Milston, Mrs. Garton Olway, looking out of her *boudoir* window, said:

"Ah! there comes Mr. Winthrop. I will go down immediately." Then, viewing herself in the long mirror, to see that all was as she would have it, she descended the softly carpeted stairs.

The maid, who had already let the visitor in, met Mrs. Olway in the hall. Taking the card she entered the library.

"I saw you coming, and came right down." After the usual preliminaries, Mrs. Olway asked: "Did your second hostess scold you the other night?"

He laughed. "No, not quite; but I just saved myself. Really, Lena"—he sometimes called her by the old playmate name—"everything was so novel to me the other evening, it quite awed me. I had no idea a missionary tea was anything so—— pleasing," hesitating before choosing the last word. "But, it was all due, no doubt, to your perfect

handling of it, and to——" He did not finish, and Lena asked, provokingly:

"To?"

"To —— you are really too inquisitive," he added, provokingly, in his turn. "I shall not indulge such a morbid curiosity!"

"But a woman's curiosity cannot be withstood, you know; you might better submit gracefully, than be ingloriously conquered."

"I prefer to run the risk," he retorted, with an impenetrable look in his deep blue eyes, while a smile lurked about his clear-cut lips. "Don't you remember how I used to risk the ice cracking on the pond, and smile back in triumph when it bore me up on my untiring skates?"

There was always a great deal of pleasantry between these two, which was a relief to Richard, for he had an exquisite appreciation of mild humor, and his stories and descriptions were the delight of Lena. She tried to repeat them afterward to Garton, but somehow she never could make them quite so inimitable as the originals.

"I saw an amusing picture, or panorama, as I came up," he continued, seeing the expectant look in her eyes. "You know I catch a glimpse of Wolcott Street Hill on my way. A long, narrow sled, bestridden by a row of small boys, glides stealthily down the road. Suddenly the scene is transformed into a distorted picket-fence of legs. A pause! Suspense! Kaleidoscopic change of adjustment! Heels descend! Heads ascend! Finis—end!" His voice and manner, whenever he spoke, were suited to his subject, and Lena

laughed at this portrayal, as she had often laughed before, saying:

"You have such a way of looking at things that nobody else would notice. Your descriptions are just like etchings."

"Thank you," he said, and was going to say something else, when Garton appeared at the door, followed by a strange gentleman.

With a look of welcome at Richard, as he shook his hand, Garton said: "Lena, I have brought Mr. Radcliffe; my old college friend, Ernest Radcliffe, of whom you have often heard me speak. I caught him in my office and brought him up by main force."

"I am delighted to see you, Mr. Radcliffe; my sister Eunice has spoken of you, also; and Garton was wishing for an opportunity to welcome you here," Lena said, as she turned toward Mr. Winthrop.

But Garton anticipated her. "And this is our friend, Mr. Winthrop, oftener known as Richard. You two ought to be the warmest of friends, with me for a medium, you know," he added, as they were seating themselves.

"This is a most delightful meeting," Mr. Radcliffe remarked. "I had longed to see Garton; but this was beyond my fondest expectations, to-day at least."

"Nonsense, Ernest! you must not be so true to your name. A little letting up is good for a fellow, you know," replied Garton, relapsing into college vernacular.

Then Richard Winthrop said: "I am glad of this

acquaintance, and I hope we can continue it some time; but," rising, "I must be going now; I have already made a long call."

"Will you not stay to dinner?" Lena appealed.

"Of course," Garton added; "now is the best possible time for you two to lay the foundations of friendship; and, though I have not seen Ernest for so long, I will not be selfish, because this is only the beginning, you know." Seeing Mr. Winthrop waver a little, he added: "Really, Richard, I am commanding people to-day. No matter if you do break an engagement or two: just blandly forget them." He spoke in a peculiar falsetto voice, which he sometimes humorously affected.

"The voice of the siren is hard to withstand," Mr. Winthrop answered, as he dropped back into his chair.

"I wonder if mother and Eunice would not come in to dinner to-day? Then the circle would be complete," Garton said, with a look at his wife.

"Shall I be excused and see?" she asked, rising.

"Yes, dear, do;" he replied; then turning to Mr. Radcliffe, he added: "You have met my sister, Radcliffe, for it was through her that I knew of your whereabouts. What induced you to take such a small charge, Ernest, for I know you were offered one of the best? I remember reading of your call to some city in Massachusetts, I think; some high notion of yours, no doubt. I remember you of old!"

"I was plainly directed," Ernest Radcliffe answered, simply; "and besides I wanted a place that I could fill full," he added, with an honest smile.

"My energies were not large enough for a city charge."

"No; I dare say not," Garton remarked; "if you do things as thoroughly as you used. I judge you are even more conscientious than you used to be, if it were possible, from the results that reach me from Milston."

Before he finished his sentence Lena returned, followed by Mrs. Olway.

"Mother, this is Mr. Radcliffe, my college friend, from Milston; and Richard you know."

"Yes, I know you both, by proxy, so to speak," said Mrs. Olway, with a motion of the head toward her son, on whom she smiled with motherly sweetness. "Eunice is out with Vina on mission work, and will not be back to dinner," she added, answering Garton's questioning look.

"I am sorry, mother. I wanted the perfect number; but there is no counting on Eunice."

They conversed pleasantly until dinner was announced; the two unmarried men forming a mutual friendship, so that by the time they sat at the table, an observer would not have known but that all were old friends at a reunion.

There is an affinity between congenial minds which needs only the chance to act, and a single instant makes it known. Thus it was with these two men, so different in nature and occupation, and happy it is, if nothing ever comes between to neutralize the attraction which binds them together.

"Oh, Radcliffe has studied the question you may be sure," said Garton, as he was carving the turkey.

Ernest Radcliffe and Richard Winthrop were discussing the probability of life sometime centering altogether in the cities, leaving the country to scattered, solitary settlements. "Paucity and pauperism will not go together in that case," Ernest Radcliffe had said. "The great problems will swarm in the cities, as indeed they are multiplying there already; and they will demand immediate attention. Indeed, we must awake to the situation soon or—but we shall awake."

"Assuming that life does flow thither, no doubt methods of reform will increase also, which will in due time cease to be simply methods, and in the course of ages, will have wrought their elevating influence in bringing about a higher type of civilization. I do not fear for the cities. It is this concentration which offers the best condition for purification. The good elements will unite and force the others out, by means of this very limitation of space, so to speak." Thus Richard Winthrop had answered just before Garton's remark.

"Yes, but were it not better," responded Mr. Radcliffe, without heeding Garton, and speaking with great fervor, "were it not better that the good elements should be so combined as to neutralize the poisonous elements, even at the risk of breaking the containing vessel," carrying out the other's figure. "There must be contact between the two, that the whole may be leavened," he added, laughing good-naturedly, as he realized that all were intently listening to his earnest words. "Perhaps I get too heated, but I have had some personal object lessons lately that have fired my imagination."

"And your zeal too, my friend," said Garton. "It is well we have such men."

Then the conversation turned upon other topics, and, at the last, before rising, they sang first a college song, then a hymn, and Garton asked Ernest Radcliffe to return thanks.

"Wasn't it a happy thought to get those two men together?" Garton asked his wife, playfully, after their friends had gone.

"Yes, but——"

"But what?" Garton demanded.

"I am afraid if things go on as they have, they may wish they had never met."

"What do you mean, Lena?" said he, looking puzzled and serious.

"Oh, do not look so solemn. Only this: that both know Eunice, and from the way they both looked when her name was mentioned, I judge they both have an equal interest in her. When they begin to suspect each other, something may happen, if there is anything serious."

"Oh, you little match-maker! I am glad I am already married, or you would have me falling in love with every woman whom I happened to chat with." He looked relieved.

"Of course Richard would stand the better chance—if Eunice does not find that it is not right for *her* to marry at all," Mrs. Olway said, as if trying to assure herself of the certainty of the declarative part of her sentence.

"Are you positive?" asked her husband, with exasperating coolness.

While they were discussing her future prospects,

the object of their concern was just coming out of a children's hospital, whither she had taken Vina, that the latter might make use of her fund of child's stories in the convalescent ward, while she spent the hour in comforting the sick and dying.

It was a trying hour for Eunice, for the sight of the poor little sufferers filled her heart with such pity that it was sometimes next to impossible for her to control her emotions sufficiently to talk and pray and sing for them, as was her wont.

Indeed, it would seem that the sight would pierce a heart of rock, and let the waters of compassion gush forth in overpowering streams. So many were maimed, or bed-ridden for life; others had been all but murdered by brutal parents; and in nearly every face there peered out a poor, crushed little spirit, which expected nothing but rebuff and cruelty. Poor, little bleeding hearts, that had been martyred, when the Father had sent them, his dear ones, as heaven's brightest boons.

The pathos of the saying, "They will reverence my Son."

The presence of Miss Olway was like magic in the hospital, and her voice, whether speaking or singing seemed to make them forget their sufferings.

"Nurse takes away the pain," said one little boy, who had been brought in from the street badly mangled in a railroad accident; "but Miss Eunice fills up the place with joy, and now I would almost rather have the pain, than not have the joy."

Miss Olway was thinking what a privilege it was to be able to give these hungry little hearts some

share of comfort, and had scarcely listened while Vina was narrating how she had told the children a certain story, which she pointed with a moral.

"I told them of a man who wrote stories, and how, in a dream, he went to a place where he was obliged to meet all the characters he had created, and how he was forced to answer why he had made them, and many other unpleasant questions, ending by saying, now you must never make up bad stories, lest you may sometime have to meet the miserable, wicked people you have made! Then one bright little fellow spoke up and said: 'Won't God be scart when he has to meet my pa!'"

"Oh, Vina; what did you say?" Eunice asked, hardly knowing whether she wanted to laugh or cry.

"Well! I confess I was dumbfounded at first, but I said something about God's not making people bad, that they grew so themselves," Vina replied.

And now it had grown quite dark. They were coming into a confused part of the city, and had to pass through the Jewish quarter before they could reach an available street car.

"We have stayed longer than usual," said Eunice, hurrying Vina along a little. "Mother may be uneasy about us."

Just then they were almost passing a tall, slim gentleman, when he raised his hat, and said:

"I beg your pardon, Miss Olway, but may I have the pleasure of escorting you home? I think it is due me in a certain sense," he added, laughingly, as she took one arm, while he offered the other to Vina.

It was Mr. Winthrop; and he proceeded to explain that he had dined with her brother, and might have had the pleasure of dining with her, had she not been out.

"You are very devoted to benevolent work," he remarked, looking down at her, as they made their way through the broad, shadowy streets, where the Jews held predominance. "We comfortable people might almost be willing to exchange places for the sake of getting such devotion—but it is very rare," he added, in the same breath.

"Indeed you would not, if you had seen the sight we just came away from," answered Miss Olway, with tears in her voice. "The children wring my heart more than any others."

"In the hospital?" he added.

"Yes; and I wish there were many, many more such places—they are blessed institutions."

Mr. Winthrop did not reply immediately, but her words deeply impressed him. He was thinking:

"If more women were like you, there would be no need of hospitals," but he had no thought of saying so aloud. It seemed to him an insult to compliment her, and he never flattered.

Then Vina remarked: "Mr. Winthrop, I must tell you the funniest thing!" and she repeated the story and the boy's question, to Miss Olway's suppressed annoyance and regret.

"It seemed so unfitting just then, but Vina does not see," Eunice thought when she was in her own room that night; and she ended by feeling more solicitude for Vina, and in reproaching herself because she was not doing more for the girl.

Not many days afterward, Mr. Winthrop ventured to call upon Miss Olway. Though diligent in his business, he gave himself sufficient leisure to satisfy his social nature. He was not incited to make money, having already a fortune, which although not large, was ample enough for his needs. He was no lover of gain for its own sake, and would never have been tempted by gold, although he might have coveted rank or fame. So he followed his calling with the moderation of the English gentleman, rather than with the restlessness of the average American aspirant, who "maketh haste to be rich."

Miss Olway was at home. In fact, she was in the parlor, seated in the midst of a company of young girls about Vina's age, and was talking to them in a low, earnest tone. Her words were evidently bits of advice or warning, or possibly a recital of personal experiences; and her young auditors sat on chairs, or crouched at her feet, listening with wide-eyed eagerness.

This was a treat which was granted to the girls quite often—as often as Miss Olway could spare the afternoon. Sometimes there were light refreshments, but oftener a pretty card or booklet, and always a loving, helpful word; for she always had a short private talk with each one—a real "heart-to-heart talk," and the girls made her a confidante.

"It is a sort of modernized class meeting," Eunice once said, after they had gone. She smiled a little at the thought, for she herself was not a Methodist; but she never hesitated to avail herself of any good idea of the sister denominations. "De-

nominations are children of one family," she said, "if they acknowledge the Father and the Son, and the good things of one are the good things of all."

She was giving the farewell advice and exhortation, when Molly came in and said:

"Miss Olway, a gentleman has called to see you. I told him you was having a young missions meeting in the parlor, and first he said he'd call again, and then, after I said 'I guess she's most through,' he said he'd wait if you didn't care. Here's his card; it's Mr. Winthrop what usually rings at the other door."

"Yes, Molly; tell him please, that I will be at liberty in a few moments."

It was with some hesitation that she went into their private library to meet Mr. Winthrop. She tried to school herself to the occasion. A call was nothing extraordinary, and it was natural that Mr. Winthrop should come, after escorting them home the other night. It was only Lena's sly suggestions that rang in her ears.

"I did not know I was so foolish; but I am learning my weaknesses every day."

Mr. Winthrop arose as she came in; and, extending his hand, said:

"I fear I have trespassed upon your precious moments; but will you not consider me an object of benevolence?" He began with real solicitude; but seeing honest remonstrance expressed in her face, he ended lightly with a smile.

He was so perfectly at ease that her unpleasant thoughts left her the moment after she had entered

the door. Of course his coming was a "mere social duty"; and she was free to be herself again.

"It was only a few little girls who come occasionally for a serious talk. I fear Molly gave you a very pretentious notion, from what she told me she said to you."

He laughed outright.

"Molly is a genius in her way. She said I would be wise to wait if I really wanted to see Miss Olway, and was not just pretending, for no one knew where Miss Olway was once in a hundred, for it was missions here, and missions there, and what not. After that I did not dare to leave for fear of compromising my sincerity."

The way in which he said this elicited a hearty laugh from Miss Olway. There was a rich, subdued tone in her laugh, like the unfettered joy of some other being—perhaps music itself personified. At least so Mr. Winthrop thought.

"Yes; Molly is shrewd and frank. I suppose she received the idea from Lena's once speaking of those who make a point of calling when they think the people are out."

This explanation sobered them again.

"You spoke of having some young girls here. You have one living with you—Miss Vina Parkes, I think, you called her. Along with everything else I greatly enjoyed her recitation the other night. She has marked dramatic talent." This was as near as he allowed himself to approach a direct compliment to Miss Olway.

She understood his delicate appreciation, and said:

"Thank you! Vina is a very dear little girl."

"The children are very fond of her," Mr. Winthrop remarked; "I remember Dora once promised me as a great favor, that I might sometime have Vina tell me stories." He also remembered Dora's adding as a climax that she would get "Auntie Eunice" to sing for him, if he would comply with a certain request; but he did not think of repeating this just now.

He did say, however—"Oh, by the way, Miss Olway, I have just received some new music, which I consider very fine, and I should be happy to send it to you if you care to look at it, for I myself cannot half interpret music in black and white. It is mostly sacred, and might be of use to you in your work."

He spoke with such disinterested frankness that she gladly accepted his offer.

"I was wishing for something new only yesterday to sing at the mission," she said, with a grateful look. It did not occur to her now that there could be any reason for hesitating.

"I shall feel greatly honored if I can have any part in your work. I see more beauty now in missions, and such benevolences as you are engaged in," he said, after a moment of silence. "My mind has changed on that subject since the tea the other evening. You succeeded in enlightening one heathen at least." He smiled slightly, but grew serious again; he could not help being serious with her. "I have always before looked upon these things as superfluous—now I see that they add real dignity and beauty to life. It would almost be a pleasure

to feel a like interest myself." His homage was unmistakably sincere.

"Can you not?" she asked, earnestly, looking at him with a new but impersonal regard.

"Can we control our feelings?" he questioned; "I mean to that extent." It was very pleasant to arouse such quick sympathy. "It is very doubtful whether I can," he thought.

"It is the will that is ours to control, and the feeling follows that," she answered, humbly.

"Our wills are ours to make them thine," she quoted a moment later from his favorite poet, looking wistfully out of the window.

He had not intended to commit himself so far, when he began, but he was very willing to go on, if she would lead.

"I know," she said, with some effort, "you do not look upon these things as vital, in the way that I do; but I should not do so if I had not seen that they *are* vital. They are only the expression of life, to be sure," she went on, still looking out into space; "and that is why they appear unnecessary—except to those who understand that life in its full meaning."

Now she was almost frightened at her own boldness; but she had spoken the words, almost without willing it. Mr. Winthrop saw her dismay and longed to relieve her, but was so deeply touched that he could not speak immediately.

"I have said too much," she gasped; "but I could not help it, and it is so real to me."

But her sympathy had not played her false. After a moment Mr. Winthrop said:

"You have moved me as I have never been moved before. I have watched your life, and now your words have revealed its motive as I had never dreamed of it before. They have opened a new realm to me. I should rejoice to be taught by you, for I see that I am very ignorant. It is that same something which eludes me which you caught so easily when looking at the picture."

"No; it is not that," she continued, forgetful of everything but her great opportunity. "It is that you see the beautiful—the divine, as an abstraction, not as a person. Without this there is no appreciation, no inspiration, there is no real worship. It is God personified in Christ; the living essence of all that is beautiful or true. It is the beautiful speaking in the soul and saying, 'Let there be light!' and there is no more night, or loneliness, or sense of self as a unit, but as bound up in God and Christ, and souls and eternity—and all else is but the expression of this, which, told in one word, is *love*, whose essence it is to seek its own—his own. But there is a crisis, and on that hangs all love's anxiety; souls may choose the abstract, and shut themselves away from love."

She had spoken as one inspired, hardly knowing what she said. He looked at her in awe. What other words could have appealed to him so strongly, lover of the beautiful as he was? He had come, believing that he loved her, and that some time he would ask her to accept his love. But now he felt unworthy to touch her shoe-latchet. She *only* was alive. She had once been beautiful to him, now she was transfigured.

After a time—neither knew how long—he spoke some incoherent words, touched her hand in parting, and she was alone, helpless and dazed at what had happened. Then she fell upon her knees in the twilight, and poured out her heart to Him who bent beside her and bathed her brow, lighting a flame of hope in her heart, and filling her with the approving presence, so that she arose renewed, and went upstairs, willing to lay all upon the bosom of her eternal rest.

CHAPTER X.

VINA.

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side.
—*Lowell.*

The development of a soul ; little else is worth study.
Her birthright was to grow from grub to butterfly.
—*Browning.*

WINTER had passed. Concerts, lectures, and teas had been attended as usual in the city, while the country had seen its customary round of donations and "surprises." Ignorance and culture, affluence and poverty had jostled in a busy world as the fleecy garments of young winter had gradually turned into the bonnie green robes of spring. April and May vied with each other in the country meadows, until June came as peacemaker, and outrivaled both.

Vina was to graduate in June. The week of anniversary was to her a prospective season of triumph. She was the acknowledged leader of the graduating class, and had come to consider herself quite an important personage. Teacher and student looked at her with favor. Her brilliancy was undeniable, and it would have been foolish to suggest a rival among her mates. Vina's marks were ninety-nine plus.

The time was drawing near. Appointment essays were written and corrected. Rehearsals were in order, and dressmakers were in despair.

Vina was to have a dainty, pure white, lace-finished mull, and a pale, blue-figured China silk, in which to carry off commencement honors. Though these were very modest in comparison with many other gowns, they were undeniably becoming, and Vina was now quite reconciled to Miss Olway's taste, after all. At any rate, she dared not be otherwise. The other requisites of a girl's toilet were added, and Vina was intensely happy. The sun shone brightly in her little world.

Mrs. Parkes had received an urgent invitation to spend the momentous week with Mrs. Olway. It was of long standing, and had been anticipated with a half-timid joy. Miss Olway wished to bring her back with them, as they came from Milston the last time before commencement, but Mrs. Parkes pleaded "a trifle more sewing" which she "must do." Eunice was forced to yield, and when back in the city became busier than ever, being pre-occupied with a "new idea." Vina was in the whirl of excitement which usually attends such a festive season. So Mrs. Parkes' coming was in part forgotten until a letter came saying that unavoidable circumstances made it inconvenient for her to come before the graduation day. The hindrance was nothing important, but she really did not care much for anything except to see Vina receive her diploma. It was more for Vina's sake that she had agreed to come at all.

This was the substance of the letter, and Miss

Olway read it with deep regret, and would have gone immediately to Milston and insisted upon Mrs. Parkes' coming, for she suspected it was the promised work that kept her, but there were very important reasons just then why she should be in the city, and she gave it up, after Vina had said:

"Well, you know, Miss Eunice, mamma really had to pretend that she wanted to be here to please me, and I do believe it would be a burden to her to go out so much. Even here," she continued, as Eunice still looked dissatisfied, "she would have a good deal of excitement, and mamma, someway, does not care much for that now."

In the midst of the general excitement, another affair in a different circle was to take place. A dramatic club, of which Mr. and Mrs. Garton Olway were members, had concluded to give a play to their select friends, and Mrs. Olway had placed her reception rooms at their disposal. Quite extensive preparations were being made, for many things later seemed necessities which occurred to no one at first, and the entertainment promised to be a rare treat.

Just two days before the night appointed, one of those who was to take part was called away, for a reason which necessitated a long absence, and it seemed likely that the play would have to be given up, or postponed indefinitely. Lena was greatly disappointed over it, when it suddenly occurred to her that Vina might take the part,—it was "Nerissa," in "Merchant of Venice," who was lacking. The thought seemed a mockery, but she argued to herself:

"Vina is such a bright girl! She can learn it quickly, I am sure; and she has a perfect genius for impersonating." She felt reassured. "Anyway, I will ask her if she thinks she can do it. If she only can, it will be delightful!"

Elated by the thought, she sought the girl. Vina was in her own room writing a letter.

"My dear, I want you very much for something," Mrs. Olway exclaimed, as she entered the room.

Vina looked up with evident surprise and expectation, though she was growing used to being wanted.

"Miss Westly, who was to take the part of 'Nerissa' in our play, has been called away suddenly. What I want to know is, could you learn it on such short notice? It is announced for the night after to-morrow. It is asking a good deal, I know, but you are so quick, and I do dislike to give it up. Could you?"

"Mrs. Olway, I can try. I can learn almost by reading over a thing, and I already know a good deal of 'Merchant of Venice' by heart. I should love to," Vina replied, with exultation expressed in every feature.

"Oh, I am so glad! I am sure you can, for you recite so beautifully. It seems perfectly natural for you to impersonate—if you will have time?" She was not quite sure yet.

"Oh! I have nothing to do now; and," reflecting a moment, Vina added, "I have no pressing engagements to-morrow, or next day, and I graduate, you know, the day after. But what shall I do for a costume?"

"Oh, we have that already. It may need refitting, that is all. If you learn the part so that we can rehearse two or three times, that will do. It does seem almost absurd, when we have spent so much time on it. It would if it were any one else; but I am sure you can do it." Mrs. Olway beamed with smiles.

"Thank you! I will try my best," Vina said, as she arose, at Lena's suggestion, and went with her to see the costume and learn more of the details.

Meanwhile Mrs. Olway senior was entertaining an old friend who had been invited for commencement week. Thus she saw less of Vina than usual, her own mind being full of the old memories, which were so dear to both these women.

After Vina had consented to take the part, she remained in her room nearly all day rehearsing it as she had often imagined herself doing. Vina was passionately fond of Shakespeare, and often in imagination endowed his characters with life and action, although she had never entered a theatre.

Thus it happened that neither Miss Olway nor her mother knew of the substitution in the play, or wondered at Vina's seclusion. On her part, it did not occur to Vina to speak of it, and besides she was entirely absorbed in her preparation.

The eventful night arrived. After the first rehearsal, Mrs. Garton Olway had no doubt of her success, for Vina took her part perfectly, to the amazement of all. They looked upon her as a prodigy, and she was flattered until her head whirled. Only a few of her less successful fellow-actors afterward remarked to their confidential friends, that

"the young girl at the Olways' might turn out to come of a line of actors, and if so they would not be surprised."

Vina knew nothing of this reflection, however, and Lena merely intimated to Garton, who took no part, that it was almost beyond comprehension that such a plain looking woman should have a daughter like Vina.

Garton dryly suggested that possibly the mother was merely playing a prosy part, and said:

"Life for her no doubt has had more prose than poetry."

The night arrived, and the cultured audience whispered in subdued accents, like bees humming in a field of clover. At last the improvised curtain rose, and the amateur performance began. Of course it was not faultless acting that was anticipated, but intellectual stimulus which such a company of Shakespearian students expected to impart by their attempt at representation. It also gave a pleasing variety to social occasions.

The part of "Antonio" was taken by Richard Winthrop, and he interpreted that noble but passive character with fine appreciation and excellent rendering, surpassing in this regard, at least, the character of "Shylock," although the latter had been assigned to a rich merchant of Jewish descent, an apostate from the faith.

But even with greater contrast did the impersonation of "Nerissa" appear more skillful than that of "Portia." Thus the two chief characters lost luster, as it were, in the presence of these subordinates.

Inspired by the expectant gathering, and the ele-

gance of the surroundings for the occasion, Vina in the height of exultation took the audience by storm. Her apperance had been kept a secret, and soon all began to surmise who this captivating young impersonator might be. The result was that at the end of the play they were in a furor of delight, and fairly overwhelmed Vina with compliments and flattery. Her known attainments at school, and her graduating honors, together with this display of dramatic genius, furnished enough material for the imaginations of some of the ladies present from which to weave a passing romance of which "Nerissa", became the transient, but no less applauded heroine.

There comes to the gifted—if not to all who attain unusual height in any particular—some moments of supreme satisfaction, resulting either from a full consciousness of yet unrecognized power, or from a free acknowledgement of the same by others, and consequent honors. To the former is added the element of hope, and this intangibility perhaps endows it with a higher bliss. The latter, however, is more often sought for, even by genius, and is always considered the omen of success.

Vina went to her room that night with the sense of a newly awakened passion within her, which was clamoring to be the master of her heart. Her whole being seemed full of a drama, of which the *denouement* was an ecstacy. She stood there in the darkness as one transfixed, her eyes ablaze, and her cheeks glowing.

What mattered it to her that Mrs. Olway supposed she was in bed long ago, or that Miss Eunice,

thinking the same, had gone to her own room immediately after the "good-night talk" with her mother. What did she care that the children were submitting to neglect with reluctance, and would be glad when Vina "graduated." No thoughts of ordinary life found a place in Vina's present absorption.

"Oh, that was glorious! and I have never known it until now! But I have found it out at last. I am beginning to live now—and I shall live. But would they like it? Would they want to stop me?" A pang shot through her heart, but its effect soon passed away.

Then she threw herself upon her bed, and gave herself up to her rapture. In her transport, she pictured herself as always acting for adoring audiences, and covering herself with honors.

"I could act forever!"

But the thought brought back to her mind the word "forever" once spoken by Miss Olway in one of the "serious talks" with a very different import, and a shadow of remorse flitted across her.

"What would Miss Eunice think if she could see me now! But Miss Eunice does not understand—she could never comprehend!"

Then remembering for an instant what Miss Olway had done for her, she buried her face in her hands for shame. But it could not last. Her desire was eating up her heart.

"I shall live for it, even if——" she was saying to herself, when a gentle rap sounded at the door.

She waited, in breathless fright, her nerves were unstrung to such an extent. It came again, and

this time a voice accompanied it. Miss Eunice was saying:

"Vina, dear! can you wake up now? I must come in."

She started from the bed and unbolted the door, filled with mysterious apprehension.

Miss Olway took her in her arms, "Why, Vina! what is it?" she asked, in some surprise. "Not undressed? How does it happen?" Eunice herself had been awakened from sound sleep, and now she could hardly tell whether she was awake or dreaming. "Speak quick, Vina! I have something to tell you. Is it providential that you are dressed? But it all seems so strange!"

Then Vina gasped: "O Miss Eunice! what is it? Why have you come?"

"A telegram," Miss Olway answered slowly, carefully, as if to spare the girl's feelings, "from Mr. Radcliffe, at Milston. Your mother is very sick, dear; but she may get well. We will pray that she may get well. I tell you the worst at once, dear——" She held Vina in her arms, soothing, comforting, and praying for her; meantime wondering, without further question, why she found Vina thus at eleven o'clock at night.

After the sobbing ceased a little, she continued: "Dear, I think we had better go at once. Garton has a carriage at the door, and will go with us. Bear up, my dear. God will give you strength. Only lean on him, dear—on Christ—he is right here with us."

But Vina had fainted.

It was some time before Eunice felt that she

ought to take Vina away, yet the telegam had said, "Come immediately."

Finally, Vina rallied sufficiently for Garton to carry her in his arms to the carriage. It seemed to Eunice a blessed thing that Vina was almost unconscious. In truth, the girl's slight frame was exhausted, although she knew not the whole extent of the case. She and Garton hardly spoke, except in monosyllables, until they arrived, for there was an acommodation train at midnight.

Mr. Radcliffe met them at the door, and as Garton brought Vina in, said, under his breath, "Poor child!"

Miss Olway placed Vina upon her own bed, in her own little room. Then she began to sob again; but Eunice quieted her by saying that Mr. Radcliffe thought Mrs. Parkes might get well, for the doctor gave some hope.

But Vina's agony seemed only more intense, as the tears ceased to flow. She was undergoing the death-throes of her previous ecstacy, now reversed —so cruelly reversed. No, and that was the most terrible thought of all, she had been cruel; while her poor mother was suffering, nay, almost dying, she, Vina, was rejoicing in what she knew was wrong; yes, rejoicing in what she felt would kill her mother, if she knew it.

"I am no better than Celia!" was her thought. "I am no better than Celia!"

The effect of Celia's heartlessness upon her mother, had made a deep impression upon Vina's childish mind.

"Oh, if mamma will only live! If she will only

live; or else I have killed her! I have killed her!" Her imagination made the suffering more intense when her conscience began to awaken—for Vina's conscience could not be entirely repressed after such a long contact with the Olways.

"The nurse says she is sleeping now," Mr. Radcliffe whispered to Miss Olway, when she came out to see what ought to be done. "She has been unable to sleep until now, and raved so about Celia and Vina and you, that I hardly knew what was best to do. She must have been under some fearful anxiety in her life. I never realized before the extent of her trouble—and I could only pray." But as Eunice looked disturbed, he added, more encouragingly: "The doctor thinks she may rally. She has been ill for several days, and I only knew it this morning. It seems she let no one know; but Mrs. Grant finally sent for me, because she was so much worse. She was trying to keep it from Vina until after she graduated."

Garton also came up as Ernest Radcliffe was speaking, and they all talked in low whispers. Presently Ernest said:

"About two hours ago, she became rational, and whispered, 'Call Vinie and Miss Eunice now, for I must go,' and then she sank away again in a stupor."

"I am so glad we are here," Eunice said, her eyes filling with the tears which had been so long forbidden. But, controlling herself she asked: "Is there not something I can do in there now?" as she looked toward the door of the sick-room.

"No, no, Miss Olway; there is a trained nurse,

perfectly competent. Your presence is all," he added, with a gentle smile.

His strong manliness gave her a peculiar sense of security and cheer in this dark hour.

"I was so sorry to be obliged to send the telegram," he said to Miss Olway. "Garton says you never received it until eleven. I am sorry, but the doctor said it was better to send immediately, as he could not tell how long she would last. He was more hopeful later." Then he looked searchingly into her face, and added: "You are very weary! Please go and rest; you can do nothing."

"Yes, Eunice, that is right," Garton added, putting his arm about her. "You must be tired. I forgot how you had tramped all day. You remember, mother told me to take good care of you."

Eunice was almost unnerved, but still controlled herself with an effort, and replied:

"I will go and lie down with Vina."

The two men talked in low whispers, as they watched through the small hours of the morning.

Finally Garton said: "How strangely things come about; who would have dreamed we two would be here just now? Life is very strange!"

"Yes," answered Ernest, "and wonderful and glorious!" Garton did not reply, and after a pause, Ernest continued: "We used to think it would be glorious, Garton." Ernest put out his hand, and clasped Garton's, as they sat opposite each other. "But the reality is grander than the promise of those early dreams, is it not?"

"For you, Ernest. For me it has been sweet —very sweet, but yet unsatisfying."

They pressed each other's hands, and sat in silence; but it was the silence that speaks more than words.

As the darkness trembled, paling at the promise of the dawn, just when that promise of light is scarcely more than an atmosphere or foreshadowing presence, there was a slight stir in the sick-room; and a little later, when hope changed into fruition, and the first real rays appeared, the nurse came out and said:

"She is awake now, but is very weak. The pain seems to have left her, but I fear she will sink away before many hours. I don't know as it is best, but she keeps asking for 'Vinie and Miss Eunice.'"

"Had I not better call in the doctor first, and get his opinion?" Mr. Radcliffe asked.

"Perhaps; yes, I guess you had better," the nurse replied.

When the doctor came out of the sick-room an hour later, he looked very grave. Miss Olway had appeared as soon as she heard the noise, and came up to him with anxious questioning in her eyes.

"You are 'Eunice?'" he asked.

"Yes."

"Her strength is giving out. I fear she cannot live through the day, but she is rational and composed, except when the spasms come on. I think it will do to let her see you, as she seems so anxious," he said, quietly. "The daughter is here?"

"Yes," Eunice answered, composing her face that she might help Vina meet her sorrow. It was hard; but she was growing accustomed to hard

things for the sake of others. Her tender sympathy made it doubly difficult.

"I can stay, if you wish it, although I think it is unnecessary," the doctor added, looking at her.

"As you think best," she replied, with a questioning glance at Mr. Radcliffe.

"If it would be at all better that you were here, stay," Mr. Radcliffe said.

"Well, I will stay," the doctor answered; "at least till daylight."

Vina, meanwhile, had listened at the door of her bedroom, and learned enough to know the terrible truth. In her agony, she threw herself on her knees by the bed, and cried to God, as she had never done before.

"Forgive me! oh, forgive me, God and let her live. I will give it all up! I will be good. Oh, forgive me, and help me!"

She did not know at first that Miss Olway was beside her. She was alone with the great, great God. The same eye that had looked upon her in the play, had also looked upon her suffering mother, and now he was going to punish her. Eunice simply put her arms around the shivering little form, and prayed mutely by her side.

After a time, Vina became conscious of Eunice, and said:

"Oh, tell me! Will he let her live?"

"Darling, he knows best. He will only take her to himself; not away, only nearer to him; and soon again, he will come to take us too, and then it will all be joy!"

"Celia!" sobbed Vina.

"Yes, dear, Celia too; for I believe he is going to let us bring back Celia. We have prayed so long, dear, and God is so good."

Vina was quiet for a time. Then she drew closer to Eunice.

"She wants to see us?" she whispered.

"Yes, dear," Eunice said softly, folding the girl to her bosom.

A calm stole over them. They arose. Eunice bathed Vina's cheeks and smoothed her hair with her magnetic hands, then sitting upon the bed, Eunice held Vina against her breast, waiting until she could speak.

"We must go now?" Vina asked, faintly.

"I think so, darling."

Mrs. Parkes was again in a stupor when they entered the room. The nurse said that she wakened and dozed alternately.

They sat close to each other by the bedside, and Vina pressed her closed eyelids against Eunice's neck. After a while, Mrs. Parkes opened her great, staring eyes. When she saw Miss Olway, she smiled as if she had always been there, and whispered:

"It is all right now. I am not going to worry any more."

She closed her eyes again, for a moment, and then aroused herself. Her face had a beautiful expression of repose, such as they had never before seen there. It stopped Vina's weeping and strengthened her for the ordeal.

"Vinie, my child," she whispered, speaking slowly for her, and at intervals; but she held out one bony

hand, "It was all God and Miss Eunice! They have done it all for us. I was to blame for Celia," and then as a happy light came into her eyes—"but that is all right now. He says 'don't worry, my child, we will see to Celia and Vinie.' We looked after you, you know—only you just better tell Vinie, so she will help too." She was holding Vina's hand, and appeared lost in thought.

Soon she sank into another stupor, and the nurse said they had better go until she awakened again. But Vina could not bear to move; so they sat a long time in silence. The breathing was growing heavier, and the nurse moved about quietly, watching her patient with furtive glances. Presently Mrs. Parkes stirred slightly and motioned for Miss Olway to come nearer.

"Mr. Radcliffe," she whispered, faintly.

When he came, she seemed satisfied.

"Pray!" her lips faltered.

He kneeled beside the bed, where she could see his face, and prayed as if he were whispering into the ear of God, who seemed to be bending just above them.

There was a wonderful sweetness and light in the room when he ceased. A sudden strength came to the dying woman. She said aloud:

"Oh! It is the most wonderful of all!" Then turning to those around her bedside, she asked suddenly: "Are they all here? Oh, tell everybody to give all they have to those who are hungry. He will give it to them all; at first, then they must give—— Miss Eunice gave——and God——" She sank back with closed eyes. Mrs. Parkes was dead.

CHAPTER XI.

BONDS OF LOVE.

It was not with bonds of common love
Our hearts were knit together.
We had seen
Each other's strength and truth of mind and hence
We loved with passion's holiest confidence.

—*Anon.*

IT seemed a year to Vina since that fatal night, as she sat in the "mother's room" with Mrs. Olway and Eunice two weeks after the funeral. She herself appeared much older; her thin, little face was wan, and she looked half sick, as she lay back in the easy-chair, which the maltese cat shared with her while he purred sleepily under her arm. Mrs. Olway sat near holding her hand, and Eunice was in her favorite position, with her head upon her mother's lap. Few words were spoken; but all were thinking seriously either of the present, the past, or the future.

It was not exactly known what had hastened the death of Mrs. Parkes, although she had a secret trouble which, the physician said, together with overwork, had at last broken her constitution.

Eunice blamed herself for not going to Milston earlier; but Vina had not strength enough now to blame herself for anything. She could only think and think, stunned by her disappointment and sor-

sow. Her twinges of remorse grew less and less as she said to herself again and again:

"It was wicked! but I will be good now! I will be good now!"

Before she came to this conclusion, she passed through a period of torment, doubt, and despair. She struggled herself into a woman. Just at the height of achievement and expectation, flushed with pride, the blow had come as a knell, a deprivation, a punishment. She not only lost her mother, but she also lost the honors of graduation. The great burden of sorrow, weighted with smaller trials, had fallen upon a nature which was keenly sensitive to every shade of suffering. Vina had also an affectionate nature, and she endured more distress in proportion as she was more than ordinarily imaginative. Now she would cry out against fate, which had brought her to this trouble; or she would tremble as she pictured herself on the verge of the chasm into which she had fancied Celia plunged in disgrace; or she would melt in penitence at the thought of Miss Olway and her own mother's deathbed. Her imagination magnified the strength of her passion, and made of the night on which she acted, a crisis in her life. As a climax she felt that James had deserted her, and his few serious words proved as arrows to her remorse, for she thought: "I had indeed become frivolous."

Changeable and susceptible even in grief, she had been tossed about until now, spent and matured, she lay back in her chair, simply grateful for her mercies. Some time she would confess all to Eunice and Mrs. Olway. Now she craved only rest.

While Vina was passing through the "deep waters" of her life, James Blake, her old Milston champion, was engrossed with the usual duties of an academy graduate. He had acquitted himself with credit, but he took his honors gravely. The love and respect of his classmates and teachers thrilled him with quiet exultation, and the thought of parting with them, made his heart swell with pain. Life assumed a serious aspect from his point of view.

"I am almost out in the world now," he said to himself one night, during commencement week, "for the medical school is like taking up the profession, as an apprentice, so to speak. I cannot hope for college in between, however tempting such a course of study may appear. Father thinks I have now gone very deep, but I never thought a graduate could know so little. I am only a shallow, superficial student. Indeed, I have hardly made a scratch upon the crust, to say nothing of boring to the very center of truth."

Mrs. Blake had not instilled her principles of thoroughness to no good purpose.

"Once out in the world," he mused, "when I get fairly started, I hope I will not have to go slow for long. She graduates too, mother says; has been very brilliant, probably the leader of her class." He took out his mother's last letter, and read: "'Vina Parkes came home as usual with beautiful Miss Olway. Vina seems rather proud of herself, I fancy;' yes, hasn't she reason?" he interpolated, with a little indignation. "And yet, Vina might get too proud to take me—but no; she's with Miss

Olway. I have no fear, and I know she favored me once," he added, with a sense of security as to probabilities. James never worried.

It was not until he came home for a day or two —his mother did not see him graduate after all— that he learned of Mrs. Parkes' death. He was greatly distressed, and said:

"Why, mother! If I were not engaged to begin work so soon, I should go right out to the city and see Vina. It was hard for her!" He trembled with emotion, and his mother's conjectures changed to convictions.

"Vina Parkes is smart enough, but she is not steady enough for James," Mrs. Blake thought, with annoyance mingled with a little jealousy. "I hoped he would forget her. Of course I expect that James will marry some time, but not yet for ever so long, and I am sure he will meet plenty of girls more suitable, if not quite so clever. I would rather he would have some one you can depend upon summer and winter; but I don't condemn Vina for a flirt—no, not that—she is versatile, I guess. There is too great versatility. Now, there is Charles II.—but what a comparison."

James went over to see Mr. Radcliffe. He was greatly disappointed when neither his mother nor Mr. Radcliffe came to see him graduate; but now he understood it.

Mr. Radcliffe was in his study.

"James, my boy, my brother. I am heartily glad to see you," he said, as he came forward to greet him in the hall. "I knew your voice. Come right into my study. That will be cosier, and we can

talk more freely. I have wanted to have a talk with you. In fact, I was thinking of you as I heard you ask for me, at the door.

"Mr. Radcliffe!"

"Brother!" interposed the other with a smile.

"Yes, brother—for if any one deserves that name, it is you—I did so hope you would be out to see me graduate. Of course I know why," and his great black eyes grew moist. "Did she take it hard?" he inquired, eagerly.

"I wanted to talk a little about her," Mr. Radcliffe answered. "You," he did not hesitate long, "care for her very much, James?"

James Blake grasped his outstretched hand in speechless acknowledgment.

"There is something I must tell you," Mr. Radcliffe continued, intending to get at the worst at once. "You know about the sister?"

James bowed an affirmative.

"I have gotten track of her."

James' eyes widened.

"Yes," he proceeded; "it came about in a strange way, humanly speaking. I saw her once, before coming here, although I did not dream it was she until about a year ago. It was in Brooklyn, and I was going through the worst part of the city with a friend, a detective, to get a clearer idea of that kind of life, and I saw her in one of the worst places. But now I have certain proof that it was she."

Mr. Radcliffe was keenly alive to the effect this disclosure would have upon James; but he felt that it must be made. The most difficult part was yet to come.

"I first suspected that it was the sister from something in Vina's face and manner, as she was relating an incident."

James recoiled visibly. Mr. Radcliffe had expected it. There was an indignation in James' eyes that would have fortified Vina's doubting heart. But James was moderate; he did not say, "How dare you intimate that Vina has a single trait like her sister?" He was only feeling what a curse it was to her—"innocent Vina." Oh! that he might save her from this sister.

Mr. Radcliffe saw the struggle and said:

"Pardon me just for the present. It is hard, but you must face it; yes, face it, James, and right it. It can be done!" Ernest Radcliffe had a wonderful personal magnetism. It had been noticeable from his early boyhood. In the pulpit, he carried his hearers almost whither he would by his simple presence.

"Mr. Radcliffe, forgive me for thinking you unkind!" James implored.

Mr. Radcliffe reassured him, and proceeded. "As I have studied it carefully, I must tell you my honest conviction, James. Vina is in many ways like her sister." He went on firmly, though James' face cut him like a knife. "She has the same temperament, and equal, if not superior gifts; and a natural aptness for impersonation."

James started.

"She is susceptible, easily led——"

"How do you know all these traits belonged to the other?"

"By careful inquiry, and through my friend, the

detective. But, of course, all strictly secret." Then he added, with more emotion, "James, do you know I think her mother's death has saved her. I mean with the preparation she had by being with Miss Olway."

"Saved her!"

"Yes; from herself, and the impulse of her nature, perhaps; she has the promise of true sweetness in her; but it will take time. Now, James, I give this as a warning, for you ought to know. To take a wife is a most sacred thing. Be brave. Be hopeful. Above all, trust God, and pray for this one thing, if it is his will, and I believe you will have your desires crowned at last with the blessing —the best that can come to a man on earth—a virtuous woman, your counterpart."

After a moment, James said, with trembling voice:

"Brother, I am glad you have told me all. I shall never give her up, and I know she will be always lovely; she will grow to be like Miss Olway!"

"God grant it!" returned Mr. Radcliffe, like a mingled prayer and benediction.

They sat silent for some time. Then James spoke of his immediate prospects, and some words of advice and encouragement were given on the one side, while expressions of earnest gratitude fell from the other's lips, and then James went out into the night.

Love has been called the "greatest thing in the world."

Wisdom made the world, but love peopled and

saved it, and love has been reigning in it ever since. What was it that transformed the first Eden into paradise, and afterward made the sweat-drops of labor sweet to the human brow when the first criminals were shut outside the "flaming" gates?

What prolonged the siege of Troy? What made fourteen years of service easy to Jacob, the wrestler at Jabbok? Why did the taloned bird of prey tear open the heart of Rachel with anguish that could not be assuaged; or what prompted the cry from David, "O Absalom, my son, my son?" What sundered the heart of the Father, and drew the God-man to Calvary?

Love—love. The primal force of the universe, of which man's share, as compared with the Almighty's, is as zero to infinity.

Meditation on love as an active force in the world, was occupying the thoughts of Ernest Radcliffe until long past midnight after the interview with James Blake.

"Strange that he should love her," he mused, "if anything can be called strange. Now it is not strange that I ——" He did not allow himself to formulate the sentence, but gave himself up to the thought of Eunice Olway, as it were, in a sort of trance.

Another might have interpreted his mind, and said:

"What purity! what womanly grace! what self-sacrifice!" and he would have agreed with it; but to him, she was simply Eunice. To him, as Mrs. Parkes might have said—and his eyes moistened at the remembrance—that name was just

another word for all that was womanly and virtuous and beautiful.

Ernest Radcliffe looked at objects in masses, except when, for some reason, it was necessary to examine in detail. He once went so far as to say, "Eunice is ——," and then, after a moment of reflection, added, "inexpressible. I have seen her in the most trying situations, and she was always loveliness itself. I am not worthy of such a prize—but how gloriously we could work together! She would inspire me to my ideal Christian heroism. God moves in a mysterious way; but now I begin to see why he put me here. Even though the prize be withheld, to have known her will be a constant inspiration."

Ernest Radcliffe had not yet declared his love for Eunice Olway, even though he had been thrown with her a good deal of late. In truth, the circumstances under which they had been placed made it seem selfish and ignoble to think of personal affairs. His individual love had, in a measure, been lost in his compassion for the others in whose service they had met. Moreover, his interest in the work of his charge absorbed him. But his love for Eunice Olway was like the breath he drew, none the less a reality, because he was by nature often unconscious of it. He had long since purposed to seize the prize, if possible, being "one of the brave who deserve the fair," as his mother used to say whenever he brought her some dearly bought trophy. But to-night, all the strength of his manhood was concentrated upon his personal love and personal hope; and he felt more than ever before love's solicitude.

"Has my sympathy with James' anxiety turned into sympathy for myself? I will wait no longer: but will seek the earliest opportunity."

In truth he had intuitively felt all along that his love would be reciprocated, but he had hardly dared harbor any more than this vague assurance. Yet, even this degree of hope made his eyes fairly leap, as he arose and stretched his arms above his head. Ernest Radcliffe had a certain majesty of proportion; but there would have been an impression of grandeur if one could have seen him that night.

This same evening, in their home in the city, Mrs. Olway said to her son:

"Your friend, Mr. Radcliffe, has a manliness of countenance which is an inspiration."

Eunice was present at the time, and colored visibly, so that Garton, who was watching her, noticed it and mentioned it afterward to Lena.

"Now, Garton," Lena declared, "you may be sure Eunice never heard a word you said. She was probably writing a very sympathetic letter to one of her *protégés*, and was excited."

"Ha! ha! wifie. You were quick to interpret the change of expression on the faces of our two masculine friends; but,"—and he assumed his peculiar falsetto voice—"a woman needs to learn a thing or so, and *it is* so." Then he added in his ordinary tone: "Besides, you know Eunice never loses a word mother says."

"I wonder why Richard has not been here lately; he has called only once since the entertainment," said Lena, straining her brown eyes in perplexity.

"Oh! he is probably hunting up a second for his duel," he replied, nonchalantly.

"You wicked man!" returned his wife, laughing.

Mr. Radcliffe had intended to go to the city the day following James' visit, but he was called to attend the funeral of a child out in the country. The following day was Sunday; so it was Monday before he rang the bell at the Elmwood Avenue entrance of the Olway mansion.

"Miss Olway is not in," said Molly. "She's gone out in the carriage with Vina; but she'll be back soon, I guess."

Molly was anxious to please the gentleman, for she had made a sort of hero of him ever since she saw him at Mr. Garton Olway's dinner table.

"Isn't he commanding like? but I wouldn't be afraid of him a mite, neither!" she had said rather boastfully to the waitress on that occasion.

But she explained to Mr. Radcliffe:

"The little girl is not well, and rides make her feel better. Oh, but,"—a sudden thought seemed to occur to her—"Miss Olway is going to Milston afterward. I heard her tell the coachman so. Maybe ——"

"Thank you; I will not wait." He did not offer his card.

"Shall I tell her——?" she asked, hesitatingly.

"No, I will call again."

He was just crossing the street a block away, when a carriage stopped, and a voice called—

"Mr. Radcliffe!"

He lifted his hat and stepped up to the carriage, offering his hand to Miss Olway and Vina.

"I was just wishing to see you." She had spoken on the first impulse, and now was consciously blushing.

Mr. Radcliffe was too happy to notice any slight embarrassment, and answered.

"I have but this moment come away from your house, and my call was very urgent." He ended with a peculiar smile.

"Will you get in?" she asked, moving along on the seat. She sat facing Vina, and was riding backward.

"Thank you," he answered, taking a seat beside her.

Then he talked to Vina, showing regard for her health and feelings in such a way that she forgot herself for a moment.

"Do you feel like riding a little longer, dear?" Eunice asked, looking tenderly at Vina.

"No, Miss Eunice, I feel tired now."

Mrs. Olway came to the door to meet Vina, and Eunice was uncertain whether to alight and invite Mr. Radcliffe in, or simply explain to him that she was going to spend the night at her uncle's in Milston; but the driver started on—he was merely carrying out previous orders.

Before she could interpose, Mr. Radcliffe laid a deterring hand on hers and said:

"Oh, do let him go on! I know where you are going, and I have longed for an opportunity to be with you."

She could say nothing; a mysterious intuition kept her silent.

He went on more earnestly:

"I know now why I was led to Milston; for all the rest is summed up in this one reason: you were at Milston—and I love you."

He leaned a trifle nearer her.

"I love you—is my hope realized?"

His face was beaming with confidence, yet he would make quite sure. It is easy to endure suspense when one knows what the result will be.

Eunice Olway looked her answer; and they sat in outward silence, made vocal to their ears by the voices which have echoed down from paradise.

At last she spoke: "Heaven seems very near!"

"Our heaven on earth," he answered. The manliness which Mrs. Olway had noted in his face was almost sublime now. "With you by my side, we can make heaven on earth for many!"

"Oh, it will be glorious!" she said, trembling.

The sight of her face so thrilled him that he could not speak.

Finally he whispered: "One in him, and in all his thought!"

They uttered these and other such words at intervals, totally unconscious of the fact that the roads were delightfully smooth; that the air smelled of genuine June, or that the sky was like mother-of-pearl. For a long time even they were unmindful of the grassy roadside, and the promising meadows that stretched away into a hazy vista. What did it matter to them whether they were in city or country, in June or December, when spirit blent with spirit?

What did they know or care, that the driver—well-meaning man though he was—had noticed the

tall gentleman, and had a pardonable curiosity to see him seated by the side of his "young lady."

"He must look grand in a carriage," he argued.

Solely from this æsthetic standpoint, of course, Tom glanced around and looked down upon the two —the taller form bending slightly toward the other.

"Sure! they're mighty earnest—they talk so low."

Then he muttered to himself: "I guess he means business, an' I guess she's goin' pardner. Well! he's the first I've seen in an age that ought to stand any chance. Yet there is another gentleman! an I kin' o' took to him fur her; but I guess like he's aristocracy—an' she'd no go that. She's fur feedin' the poor. None o' yer sittin up in silks an' velvets fur her!"

Tom took a paternal interest in all that concerned Miss Olway, but he was obedient as any serf.

"Oh, Ernest!" Eunice ejaculated, softly. "I wanted to speak about——"

"Ah! I interrupted you," he said, committing the offense again, but with the air of one who expects to be forgiven. "My errand was most important, you know." But seeing her self-reproach, he asked gravely, "What is it, my love?"

"It is about Celia. I want more information. I want to try to find her."

Ernest had questioned Eunice in regard to Celia's character, feeling that he could not dispense with her judgment in so important an investigation; and then, without previously intending it, he had told her of his suspicions; and later, the news from "Joe," concerning Celia's sudden disappearance.

Eunice now wished to consult him as to the desirability of "Joe's" attempting to find Celia, not knowing that he had already committed his friend to the undertaking.

"Oh, if we can only find her!" exclaimed Eunice. "Love will bring her back," she continued, with eyes that could not smile, lost in their own happiness alone.

"Be sure, dear; love has kept her, and love will bring her back, I feel sure, some time; for his love has free course in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure, and be sure it is his pleasure to let you lead her home—at last!"

No spoken words of assurance had ever strengthened her faith as these—not even her mother's.

Mrs. Parkes' house at Milston was to be sold, and whatever was left after the mortgage was paid, together with a small sum which Mrs. Parkes had saved out of her dressmaking by rigid economy after Miss Olway had undertaken Vina's support, was to be divided equally between the children if Celia returned; otherwise all was Vina's, so said Mrs. Parkes' simple will. Of her personal effects, Mrs. Parkes left a keepsake for Miss Olway, and one for Mr. Radcliffe, together with a letter of loving gratitude. She also left a letter each to Vina and Celia; the message to the latter overflowed with tender forgiveness, which was pathetic in the extreme.

The lovers found a moment to speak of these things before parting that night, and to rejoice that they had been privileged to make Mrs. Parkes' life a little easier.

CHAPTER XII.

PLANS AND PURPOSES.

What we call little things are merely the causes of great things.—*Amiel.*

ABOUT a week later, while the family was at lunch, Garton said to Lena:

"I saw Richard to-day, wifie."

Suddenly Dora asked, in a high key: "Why doesn't Uncle Richard come here to dinner? He is just naughty! Papa, you tell him I won't forgive him if he don't come to-night."

"Nor I," shouted Hollister, so loudly that his mother remonstrated:

"Hollis, you are not a gentleman now. Uncle Richard would never shout like that."

The children always called Mr. Winthrop "Uncle Richard."

"It is dreadful, Garton. It is just dreadful," Lena said, with a sigh.

"Of course it is dreadful," Hollis repeated, with scarcely less animation than before.

"I know he called one day, and no knowing but Eunice——"

"Why doesn't Auntie Eunice ask Uncle Richard to come?" demanded Hollis.

And Dora answered, with disgust: "Holly, Auntie Eunice doesn't like Uncle Richard."

"She doesn't?" exclaimed Hollis. "Well, I don't like Auntie Eunice! She's naughty," he added, with great superiority.

"What makes you think Aunt Eunice does not like Uncle Richard, Dora?" asked their father, with suppressed amusement.

"'Cause I heard mamma say Aunt Eunice would not come to see him one time when——"

"But that is not a good reason, Dora. Never say so again, dear, because it is not true."

Dora looked hurt, so he added: "Never mind, Dody, you misunderstood mamma."

Garton thought best not to say any more about Mr. Winthrop before the children; but just as he was leaving for his office, he kissed them good-bye, and sent them to the nursery, retaining Lena in the hall.

"Richard promised to dine with us to-morrow, when I told him. I will tell you just what he said, and you may judge for yourself. He looked a little pale anyway, before I spoke; said he'd been very busy. After a moment, I said: 'Oh, look here, Richard; I have some news for you; my sister is engaged to Radcliffe.' I went on to say that I 'might have suspected something to happen when they met so often at Milston.'"

"How did he take it?" asked Lena.

"A flash of lightning seemed to pass over his face; but, in an instant he looked apparently unharmed. I almost believe you were right, Lena. But if it is so, Richard is the prince of heroism—for he congratulated me sincerely on having Radcliffe for a brother, and said he never knew of a better match."

"It will kill him, Garton. He has always had everything he wanted. Poor Richard!"

"Dear, you must not feel so. Men do not take these things like women. Of course it will cut terribly at first; but he will rise above it, and in time it will wear off."

"Oh, Garton!" Lena returned; "you men are so heartless. But Richard is more like a woman, and he will suffer like a woman." She had once maintained that Richard had the best qualities of a man and woman combined.

Garton was always amused by her extravagant praise, knowing that he had not the shadow of a reason to be jealous.

"Perhaps so, dearie; you understand him, I know. It is sad; but Radcliffe is grand, although you will not so much as look to see. And Eunice is not to blame. It would almost spoil her happiness if she knew she had ruined another's."

"Of course I know; we must not reproach her. But it seems awful to me, when I had expected——"

"Yes, wifie; you expected, and are so much the more disappointed. But she could not marry both, you know; and I should hate to have one disappointed as much as the other. Besides, you now can help Richard, perhaps. Your sympathy, even though unspoken, may help to heal the wound."

"Still, I am afraid it will kill him," she persisted.

Ernest Radcliff was on his way to Milston that afternoon, as blissfully unconscious that his happiness was a cross to any one else, as Lena was conscious of wishing that he had never met Eunice.

"It all comes of Eunice's ruling passion for mission work," she affirmed.

Ernest Radcliffe felt that success was everywhere crowning his efforts; but his great joy was tempered with a sense of unworthiness. Yet even now, he did not dwell long upon himself. He was going to Mrs. Blake's, and hoped that he would find her alone, for he wished to talk about her son.

His wish was not gratified, however, for Mrs. Doty was making a neighborly call.

"Well, Mr. Radcliffe! I was just saying to Mrs. Blake that great things have been going on in this place since you came. You and Miss Olway just started us to work. To think of it, as I said to Pete, here is a new meeting-house almost done, and everybody interested. And what is more, the cash all paid for it. But Pete always says, 'Mrs. Doty, there are folks who move, and there are folks who move *things*, and you and I are not the last.'"

"The new church is an achievement," Mrs. Blake responded, cordially. "James said he was very proud of it; and it did him so much good to see the boys again,—the ones who used to be so rough,—and find them such sturdy young men, and as interested in the church as they formerly were in plaguing old Mother Brown."

"We do not realize what possibilities are lying in coarse material," said the minister. "We have not all eyes that can see the angel in the block of marble."

"Nor the block of marble in the angel, neither," said Mrs. Blake, with an intelligent smile at Mr. Radcliffe.

As Mrs. Doty looked hopelessly confused, she explained: "You would not believe that stool there," pointing to a handsomely cushioned ottoman, "was once an old nail keg. Just the same way, some day you will not dream that Tom Shaw was once a young bully."

When the conversation took this practical turn, Mrs. Doty was at her ease again. "That is so; that is so," she affirmed. Then she arose and exclaimed: "Now, Mrs. Blake, do not come to the door. I saw Pete was coming, and I thought I would get out in time, for Pete is in a hurry to-day, as we are going to Jennie's."

Now Mr. Radcliffe could talk of James, who was a favorite topic with them. Mrs. Blake implicitly trusted her pastor's judgment, and she already considered him her son's guardian. Mr. Radcliffe, moreover, always felt sure of her co-operation.

"James made you quite a call the other night," Mrs. Blake began. "To tell the truth, I was jealous of you; he was here such a little while."

"Yes;" Mr. Radcliffe replied, not quite sure how to proceed.

"He wanted to know all about the funeral, no doubt?" she asked; and then with a facial expression peculiar to her, added: "but was more concerned for the living than the dead, possibly?"

"I thought you suspected, but was not quite sure," Mr. Radcliffe answered, with relief. "Yes, we had quite a talk about Vina. I had to tell James something which was very painful; but happily I could assure him that I thought it would come right in the end, if he will wait."

Mrs. Blake was all attention.

"Oh! Mr. Radcliffe, I think he wanted to tell me, but he just could not. I never saw him so cut up, as he was that night. I sat up to wait for him; and I knew in a minute it was about her; and I just could not say anything, either," she confessed, the tears coming to her eyes.

"This is secret, of course," Mr. Radcliffe began. "You remember the other daughter?"

Mrs. Blake gave a quick start.

"Every one supposed she was simply heartless: but," he added, sadly, "she has wandered far in sin. I have accurate knowledge of that fact. As to where she is now, I know nothing, except that she disappeared suddenly from what was once her abode."

Mrs. Blake was agitated. "I never saw her, but I have not liked Vina's ways lately." Her mother-jealousy could not be restrained from this outburst. "She seems so unstable," she explained, modifying her tone.

"That is it! Not that we should think of condemning the poor child; that would be simply barbarism"—this with almost savage warmth. "But traits live in the blood; and a wife——"

"Oh, no!" Mrs. Blake ejaculated. "Never!"

"Mrs. Blake," Mr. Radcliffe spoke very gently, "your son is a man now. He will think for himself; but the great thing is that he shall wait. The best influences have been at work, and they will bring forth good results, I am sure. But we must wait for the first-fruits. Now I come to my plan. We have never questioned that it would be well for

James to go through college, before taking up medicine. It seemed an impossibility. Mrs. Blake, it is not an impossibility. I have obtained a scholarship for him, and see other ways and means. It need cost your husband nothing but his consent. To be sure, it will add a little extra burden to James: he could not get into business so soon, but he is young. If he only has not lost his ambition for college! This did not occur to me until after he left. But it would be better for you to persuade him to take my offer, and go. It is the best thing for him anyway, and it will avert all danger."

"Oh, Mr. Radcliffe! You are so kind, and you always know just what is wise. How I admire such a head for things!" She forgot herself in her gratitude. "Shall I write to him?"

"Yes; I would do so right away. He needs some new prospect to take up his mind."

"But, John!" and a shade crossed her face; "he is worrying now because James has wasted so many years, as he says. But I will bring him around," she added, with regained confidence.

And she did.

When James first read the letters his heart bounded with pleasure. "Go to college! Not impossible," he repeated.

But then he reflected. "It would take so long—four years, and three more after that, besides getting started in practice. I might have some debts too. Oh! I could not stand it so long, with no hope of ever being any way but alone."

He put his head down upon his clasped hands.

"Oh, Vinie, you *are* lovely. There is no danger.

I will *dare* them all for you, Vinie; for I believe you will not be frivolous. I have trusted you ever since that night. But if I go—it will be so long—so long! Yet college; I cannot miss such an opportunity."

"There is a tide in the affairs of men."

He had been learning some quotations of late, and this just now flashed across his memory.

"I must seize it. Then fortune will come—good fortune with Vinie."

When he looked up, he wore a hopeful countenance; and that night he wrote to his mother that he would accept Mr. Radcliffe's kind offer.

While James was making this important decision, Vina was amusing the children during the intervals between their steam-coach trips. Hollis was engineer, and Dora was conductor; and every little while they would stop at some place and visit the ticket agent, who sat back in a cosy wicker-chair, reading, or pretending to read, a book. But this had no incongruity for their childish imaginations. The engineer usually called for a story as remuneration for his heavy work. Then, perhaps, he needed a little more material for steam.

"Vinie Parkes, you are a stupid! You have not told us a new story to-day," shouted the engineer, with a note of disgust in his voice.

"There are no new stories, Holly; they are all the same old ones fixed over a little."

"Well, I thought so; why didn't you tell me so before? Then I would not have stopped to listen."

"Holly," exclaimed Dora, "you are too noisy for an engineer. Uncle Richard would not do so."

"Now see here, Dody, I am not Uncle Richard, and you need not think you are my mamma. I am an engineer," and he rushed off puffing and screeching like a veritable young savage engine just put under steam.

Between these visits, Vina had time to think, which was about all the mental effort she was permitted. Mrs. Olway and Eunice devised various means to engross her attention, when not walking or riding. Vina succumbed to this treatment—listlessly at first, and later gratefully. She was spent with her struggle and sorrow, and enjoyed nothing so well as sitting in the nursery with the children. They enjoyed it equally well, for she allowed them to do anything they liked with her. The only drawback was that grandma had said they must not expect Vina to romp and play as she used to do.

When the children were first told of Vina's sorrow, they were filled with sympathy, and went about quietly for a time—a very short time, however, for Hollis and Noise were twin brothers. Dora would often whisper to herself, "Poor Vina!" They both showed their sympathy in various little acts, but when they had been told to suppress their questions, it proved too much for Hollis. The restrained curiosity must have vent at last.

"Would it make me sick if my mamma died, and would people whisper about me, and put me in a rocking-chair like——" But just then he was suddenly called to recollection by the aid of Dora's hand which had been placed over his mouth hastily, lest Vina should hear, and after his first indignation, he rushed off with a suppressed exclamation.

Vina indulged in one of her old smiles. It was good for her to be with these active, little interrogation points.

"How different it all seems!" she thought. "Once I could play horse or anything with them, but now, Oh! I would not care to. I just like to watch them when they think I am reading."

She did not like to revert to the recent past. It was all gone now, like a horrible dream. For a long time afterward she could not endure the memory of that fatal night. She did not care to see Mrs. Garton Olway or go near that room, where her fevered brain had revelled in a garden beneath whose roses a deadly viper had stung her.

Neither she nor Mrs. Olway had spoken of it to Eunice as yet. The circumstances which had followed made all those associations too painful. But Lena had said to Garton:

"How terrible it was for the child to go from the gayety and success here to meet such news."

"Yes; such things are not the best preparation for life's realities," Garton had replied.

Now, though the thought of that time still haunted her, Vina tried to turn her eyes away from its glamour.

"I cannot speak of it yet," she said "Oh, I can never be the same; for I gave it all up." She shuddered. "Miss Eunice says God never changes, and if we give up a thing, we give it to him, and can never have it back again the same."

"What makes you shake so? Are you cold, or are you reading a frightful story?" asked Dora, really quite concerned.

"No, I am not cold, Dody," Vina answered, drawing the sweet little face nearer to hers. "I was only thinking of something horrible."

"In the story book?"

"No, Dora, don't let us talk of it. What have you there?"

"Oh! only my puncher," she said, holding up a tin contrivance. "Holly bent it so it would punch tickets. I have to be very careful to punch them all."

But as she saw that Vina still looked sad, her affection all came out at once in a tremendous hug and kisses. Vina had not been in such a shower of them since she was a child with the children.

"What is all this fuss, you silly girls?" (The little boys in the streets called the girls silly, and Hollis never forgot what he overheard.) "Nice conductor, you are!" he remarked, disdainfully.

"Holly, you are just horrid; and I will not play!"

"Yes, you will play too," he said, softening a little.

"Yes, dear," said Vina, "if Holly will be good. You see he cannot get along at all without a girl, even though she is silly."

Hollis knew when he was beaten better than some older boys, and he went off to his smoke-stack, with becoming gravity.

About a week later, on one of those delightful days in the latter part of July, Vina and Miss Olway started down town, rather late in the afternoon, and took Dora with them. They might have had the carriage, but they preferred walking, at

least part of the way, and Dora enjoyed the street-car better, since her own experience as conductor.

Vina intended to return home after they had been to the drug store, but Miss Olway was going farther, to make a call or so before returning. Dora was yet undecided as to which one she would favor with her company; but she coaxed Vina to go on with them to the confectionery and bakery, holding out the inducement that she "guessed" she would go with Vina.

Dora bought a generous supply of cakes and candy, for she carried her own little purse, and shopped like a woman; and the three started out of the store together. They were obliged to pass through a poor, deserted quarter, before coming to a line of fancy stores at the corner, near which the party was to separate. Dora was still undecided which to go with, but Vina began to think she was to be abandoned.

No one ever knew how it happened, but Vina said to Dora:

"Dody, I want to run in here a moment, will you come, or——"

And Dora interupted: "All right, you go on," and thereupon turned about, and started off toward Eunice.

Vina took this as a final dismissal, and thought no more of the child, but soon started on toward home.

Meanwhile, something in another shop window had attracted Miss Olway's eye. It was just the thing to take to the little sick boy whom she was

going to visit. When she came out, neither Vina nor Dora was anywhere to be seen.

"I thought Dora would go home at the last," she said, and smiled to herself as she imagined Dora laughing with her over the joke, when she put the children to bed at night. She too turned down her corner, and walked on, thinking only of those she was about to visit, and of what she might say to cheer and comfort them.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE WERE NINETY AND NINE.

A little child shall lead them.

Truth and love are the two most powerful things in the world, and when they go together they cannot be easily withstood. The golden beams of truth and the silken cords of love, twisted together, will draw men on with a sweet violence, whether they will or no.—*R. W. Dale.*

"DID Dora go right to the nursery?" asked Mrs. Olway, in some surprise, as Eunice entered the "confidence room" soon after her return.

"What do you mean, mother? Dora came home with Vina," Eunice said.

Vina looked up questionly.

"Didn't Dora go with you?" exclaimed Vina.

"No," Eunice answered, in consternation.

All three looked horrified.

Then Mrs. Olway asked: "Where is she?"

Eunice sat down and covered her face with her hands; but Vina sobbed:

"What shall we do? What shall we do?"

After a few moments of silence, Mrs. Olway said:

"Garton must know immediately. You can tell where you separated. The carriage will go out; everything must be done. I know God will not let

harm come to her, his darling," she added, as a tear stole down her cheek.

"How frightened she will be! How ever could it have happened? I was very careless not to notice," said Eunice, upbraiding herself. "No, Vina, it wasn't your fault, so much; I ought not to have allowed you to go into the store."

She was acting at the same time that she was speaking. She called up Garton by telephone and gave him the painful message, with suggestions from her mother. She was out after Tom in another instant, asking him to harness immediately.

Vina meanwhile thought: "What if some harm has come to her!" And was in great distress as she imagined Dora in the hands of some cruel person.

Mrs. Olway thought best to keep the news from Lena, as it would only give her useless anxiety. Fortunately, Lena was out making calls at the time, having left Hollis at her own mother's until she should call for him on her return, and so there was no danger of her coming in suddenly to ask what was the matter.

Soon Tom was at the door, and Miss Olway and Vina entered the carriage to go to the place where they had separated, and hunt through the streets and stores near by, if necessary. Action made suspense easier. Mrs. Olway bore the severest strain, as she prayed alone by her sitting-room window.

Garton was almost sick at the news; but he thought: "Poor wife! She will be frantic!"

His sister had not thought to tell him that Lena was yet in ignorance. He sent out messengers to the police stations; he sent others in various direc-

tions, with descriptions of the child; he went out himself, hardly knowing where he should go. But fortunately he met Richard Winthrop. The latter, seeing Garton's white face, asked:

"Garton, what is the matter? Is Lena sick?"

"Dora! Dora is lost!" was the answer.

They went on together, Richard Winthrop finding out what had already been done and suggesting other lines of action. His presence and sympathy were as a soothing balm to Garton, for the latter had never been so crushed as at that moment.

"My tender, timid, little Dora, lost in this great, heartless city!" The thought was unbearable.

He suffered a double portion—for Lena as well as himself. Richard Winthrop also suffered, for he was very fond of the little maiden.

Meanwhile, Miss Olway and Vina were walking up and down the streets, peering into all the alleys, and making fruitless inquiries at all the stores. No one had seen anything of a little girl straying alone. They tried to imagine what Dora would do.

"She would ask some one to take her home, perhaps," suggested Vina, inwardly filled with terrible doubts; "she would cry, though, and be very frightened at first."

"I am afraid she has tried to go by herself and gotten lost," returned Miss Olway. "No, that cannot be! If she only thought to tell them her name, and that her father was the editor, people would know."

"She is not here—anywhere, that is certain," declared Vina, after their last thorough search. "What shall we do?"

"Let us go to Garton's office," replied Miss Olway, more hopefully. "Perhaps some one has found her."

No; no one had found her. Garton and Richard had but just entered, thinking of the same possibility. This was the first time that Richard Winthrop had seen Miss Olway since her engagement had been announced. The general agitation made the meeting easier than might otherwise have been expected.

As they were consulting together, a telephone message came from Mrs. Olway to the effect that Dora had been brought home by a stranger.

"I thought she would persuade somebody to go home with her," was Vina's first remark after the good news; but she spoke in a different tone from the one she had used when she had previously made a similar statement.

When Dora told Vina to "go on," she had just caught sight of a queer, crouching figure on some steps in an alley near by. Dora could plainly see that it was a woman, and that she looked dejected and distressed. It would be "so nice," the little maid thought, to give the woman a cake and make her look up, and it would be fun to frighten Vina, and then run out when Vina was sure she was lost.

This was a strange fancy for Dora; but the child had acted unlike herself in being so undecided. It was not like her. Some impulse seemed to have seized her, and before she realized it she was standing before the woman, whose head was bowed upon her hands.

Dora gently touched the woman's arm, and glee-

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fully held out a huge, luscious cake. After a while the woman started, and looked up vacantly. She appeared to be dazed, and put her hands to her head. Then she passed one hand across her eyes, as if she could not trust her vision.

"Eat it, won't you?" Dora asked, with her most coaxing smile.

No, this was no angel. It was real flesh and blood. The woman looked first at the child, then at the cake; back at the child again, and then she hesitated no longer, but held out a long, thin hand to receive the proffered gift. She began crunching it with evident pleasure, and the sight was appetizing. Dora took out two more, and gave the woman a glimpse into the bag.

"See what a lot!" she exclaimed, gleefully, beginning to bite into one herself. "Isn't it awful good?" Dora queried, a moment later, enjoying her new friend's appreciation.

The woman nodded, still gazing at the child.

By this time Dora had forgotten all about her little stratagem, and Miss Olway and Vina had gone quite a distance.

Soon our friends in the alley began on their second cakes, and Dora asked, with sympathetic curiosity, as she laid one little hand timidly on the woman's knee, and looked up into her face:

"What makes you stay out here? Why don't you go in?" nodding toward the rickety building behind them, which looked as though inhabited by rats and midnight ghosts.

"I don't belong here," the woman answered, in a hoarse whisper.

Then after a moment's reflection, Dora continued:

"Where do you belong?"

"Little dear, I don't belong anywhere," the woman answered, and her chin quivered.

At this sign Dora looked at her with childish sympathy and pity, and said, in a whisper, "Dody's sorry."

The woman was not accustomed to such treatment. The tears fairly streamed from her eyes, and her frame shook with suppressed sobs.

Then Dora laid one arm around the woman's neck, which was bowed upon her knees, and said, in accents of childish tenderness:

"Poor woman! Dody's awful sorry." But presently, as a new thought occurred to her, she whispered: "Don't cry any more; don't, because Dody will take you home with her to her house. Dody's got a house—a great big house; and Dody's papa and Auntie Eunie and grandma will love you,—oh, lots! They love everybody," she added.

She was so absorbed in trying to stop the woman's tears that even the name of Eunice did not recall her to her situation.

"If anybody's awful sorry," the child continued, "grandma puts them on the couch in her room, and covers them all up, and kisses them and tells them stories till they go to sleep and forget all about it." She was growing eloquent with assurance. "Because Vinie was awful sorry too, and now she isn't," she added, triumphantly.

Few physicians had such a persuasive advocate as grandma.

The sobs grew fewer; and after Dora had tried several times very gently to raise the bowed face with her soft little hands, the woman lifted her head again and looked at Dora from beneath her swollen eyelids. Dora smiled at her lovingly. That fresh little face framed in careless ringlets of fine-spun gold was sweet enough to rivet the eyes of more fortunate mortals than this woman appeared to be.

"My name is Dody—Dody Olway. What's your name?" asked the child.

"Dody?" repeated the woman. "Dody?" And then she looked so searchingly at the child that Dora added:

"Oh, well! I am really Dora; but I like 'Dody' best. Holly—that's my baby brother—he calls me Dody, and so does Auntie Eunie, and grandma sometimes. Oh, yes, and Vinie too. But mamma calls me Dora, and papa,—well! I guess he calls me a—a—a dear." This recital carried her so far from the original question that she forgot to press it further.

"Yes, yes!" the woman again repeated. "Can it be?" But she had scarcely enough strength left to arouse further curiosity.

Suddenly Dora exclaimed: "O—h!" and a frightened look came into the little face. She dated off in an instant, but stopped on the sidewalk, looking about quickly, from one side to another; then she turned around and said: "Oh, they have gone and left me!" and ran back to the woman, while the tears began to well over.

"What is the matter, little dear? Has some one left you?"

"Auntie Eunie," she whispered, "and Vina," beginning to cry, "they have forgotten me."

"Never mind, little dear! We will see if we can find them," said the woman, trying to rise, and standing up with difficulty.

Dora's tears were dried, and her face brightened. "I know the way home," she said, reflecting. "I can find papa's house, if you will go with me."

"I go with you?" repeated the woman, wonderingly. "I was not intending to go to any house. I was going——" and a shiver passed through her frame, but she did not finish.

The child gathered up her bag, and took the woman's hand confidently, pulling her along.

"See; we go this way. Are you afraid you wlll break to pieces?" Dora asked, innocently, looking up. The question brought the first smile she had seen on her companion's lips.

"No; I am only tired, and——"

"We will take the street-car. Do you know which car we take?" Dora asked, beginning to doubt her own infallibility.

The woman put her hand to her head, as they walked on.

Dora was prattling about how nice it was to ride in the cars, and how she herself had punched tickets, when the woman said:

"Here, little dear, you get on this car, and it will take you home. Good-bye, little dear."

But Dora was dismayed; she clung to the woman's hand with all her small strength, and her chin quivered. "Oh, don't go: don't leave me all alone, please!"

The car was stopping; the woman hesitated no longer, but said:

"Just as you say, little dear," and they entered.

They were an odd-looking couple; the tall, thin woman, in shabby clothes, led by the hand of a fresh, daintily dressed child. There was something noticeable about the woman, however, though she was evidently very poor. Dora assumed the air of proprietorship, paying fare for the two with elaborate carefulness.

When they left the car, all eyes were turned in their direction, and many wondered, and others thought that "something ought to be done about it." But nothing was done, and the two trudged on up beautiful Elmwood avenue, treading upon their lengthening shadows, which hovered before them like ministering spirits commissioned to lead these lost ones home.

The rejoiced but weary seekers for Dora did not reach the house before Mrs. Olway had fondled the child enough for them all, and had brought Dora's friend into her own room, where she began talking to her kindly and asking friendly questions.

"We owe you deep gratitude for bringing our darling home," Mrs. Olway said.

"No, grandma; I brought her home with *me*," interrupted Dora. "She hasn't any house,—and now she will live with us, won't she, grandma?"

"Perhaps, dear, she might not wish to," answered Mrs. Olway, looking again at the poorly clad figure.

Before entering the house, the woman had nearly covered her face with an old drab veil, that hung loosely from her limp straw hat. A thin black

shawl was all the wrap she had, in fact all she needed; and when drawn closely about her, served to conceal the worst of her raggedness. She would not remove these coverings, even at Mrs. Olway's urgent invitation.

"The little dear was so good to me," she faltered, "and she made me come here."

"Have you then no home?" asked Mrs. Olway, gently.

"No; but that is not the worst. I was so wretched before she came," she said, pointing to Dora, and then she burst into tears.

In a moment Mrs. Olway was at her side, laying her hand on the poor woman's head.

"Do take off your things and stay with us, a little while at least. Perhaps we can help you; and you may be sure that it will not be simple charity, for we feel greatly indebted to you. You must let us help you," Mrs. Olway asserted, trying to unfasten the veil.

"No, no"; sobbed the woman. "Not yet; you must wait."

Mrs. Olway thought that she was too proud, and had evidently seen better days. "Can she be demented?" she asked herself. But aloud, she said: "My poor woman, your sorrow is great, but God gives rejoicing for sorrow. Can you not look unto him?"

There was no answer; only the sobbing ceased as Dora came and stroked the bowed head.

"I can make her stop," said the child, with confidence. Then she whispered close to the ear of the woman: "Have a sweet cake?"

"Perhaps she is hungry," thought Mrs. Olway. Acting upon this probability, she went out across the hall and told Mollie to prepare a warm lunch as quickly as possible and bring it to her sitting room.

While she was in the hall the others came. They were asking eagerly, "Where is the child?" or "Where is Dody?"

Dora all excitement, rushed out into the hall, and between the frantic hugs of papa and Eunice and Vina, and even Uncle Richard, she ejaculated:

"Oh, papa! I have brought some one to live with us. I found her crying on the steps, and I gave her a cake, and—she is in there," she added, pointing and nodding toward her grandmother's room.

The woman's head was still bowed as they entered, but Garton went to her, saying:

"We owe a great debt of gratitude to you, and we hope you will let us reward you in some way."

Mrs. Olway had whispered a few words to him in the hall.

Without looking up the woman answered:

"It was not my doing. You owe me nothing."

"I can do no better than to leave you here with mother now. Mother and Eunice are our guardian angels, and they will care for you to-night." So saying, he and Mr. Winthrop left the room, taking Dora with them.

Lena had not yet returned.

"Won't you please let us make you comfortable?" It was Miss Olway's voice that asked the question, as she bent over the bowed figure.

Even yet the woman would not remove her wraps, but sat in the same dejected attitude.

"You are weary, my poor woman; will you not rest awhile, and partake of some food?"

Molly had just entered, bringing a tray.

After she had responded to their hospitality, the woman did not appear disposed to leave immediately. She seemed to be waiting for some special purpose. "Not yet" had been her answer to Mrs. Olway, and later to Eunice.

Finally Eunice turned a look of eager inquiry at her mother, and something trembled on her lips. At last she said:

"Will you please give us your name, so that we may remember who was the guardian of our Dora when we feared she was lost?"

Throwing back her veil, and casting off her shawl, the woman arose and suddenly exclaimed:

"Don't you know me? I am Celia!" And then she sank back in her chair again as a sudden silence fell upon the room.

What a moment! The thoughts and deeds of the past seemed crowded into a single breath.

It was not very long, although years seemed to dart across her mind, and Eunice was by Celia's side and weeping over her, and praising God.

Vina had been standing near, helpless and dazed. Then with sudden impulse, she was embracing Celia and crying:

"Celia, sister, I am Vina—little Vina! and mamma is dead. But she always loved you, and left a letter for you."

It would be hard to tell who wept the most: but there is no doubt whose heart was the most joyful.

"Found at last! Come home at last! Oh, Celia, how we have prayed and hoped; and now He has brought you home at last," Miss Olway was saying, between her tears.

But Celia could say nothing, until at last she exclaimed, sobbing meanwhile:

"Oh, Miss Eunice! I have gone to the very depths! I am not worthy to have you touch me!"

But Eunice clung to her all the more.

"I am not worthy to stay here," she went on, heedless of the caresses. "I was just going to send myself where I ought to go," she added, with a shiver, "when the little dear touched me. I should have been lying there stark and stiff to-morrow but for her. See! here is my weapon!" She held up a bottle of poison.

Miss Olway took it, with a horrified look.

"Oh, don't fear!" exclaimed Celia. "I would not take it now, but I have been tempted to many a time."

Eunice was taking off Celia's hat.

"No; wait!" exclaimed the prodigal, rising; "wait till I tell you all, and then see if you will recognize your old friend!" There was a semblance of a sneer in her voice. She paused a moment, then went on in her old dramatic style:

"I left home, but it was a prison to me then. I cared nothing for any one that I left—no. Vina, neither you nor"——her voice broke here, but she controlled herself and continued: "I hated you all; I longed for something else; I had gambled while in the city. You start! But it is so; I did it

secretly. Yes, I did worse; but gambling was my ruling passion," she went on, hurriedly. "When I left home I went to New York. There I lived part of the time, and part of the time in Brooklyn. I went to the depths, as I knew I should if I began. Finally, I married. My husband was shot one night by a professed lover. I was horrified; but feigned approval until I could expose the murderer." Here, seeing the look of pain on the faces of her hearers, she added, her voice grown husky: "I was not to blame! No; I am not a murderess! I had never encouraged the other man. Finally I gave him up to the police and left the city. Then he escaped—and now my terror is lest I shall meet him. I have endured pain, and poverty, and cruelty. I am almost a beggar!" she added, holding out her tattered sleeves. "I had no friends. I was haunted by nightmare. I found my way to this city, but dared not think of making myself known. I dared not act. I had resolved to die—and end it all!" She sank back into a chair, exhausted, but gasped: "I have told you all—now send me away!"

All were standing about her; and Eunice drawing nearer spoke, as she leaned yearningly over the stricken form.

"Who said, 'He that is without sin . . . let him first cast a stone.' Our Christ! Our Jesus stands waiting to welcome you home; and shall we cast you out? He said, 'Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow.' Oh, Celia! plunge and be washed in the blood of the Lamb!"

Celia looked up wonderingly: "Could I be

changed, as red is changed to white? Is it true, Miss Eunice?"

"True as God is God!" Eunice answered, solemnly.

"Then pray for me, Eunice, that your God will make me white as you say."

It was time to kneel down then. No one could have stood through that prayer! Eunice prayed, as she never had prayed before, and they could almost see the blessed, patient Christ still stand, knocking, knocking, knocking at the stubborn door. It was touching to see him waiting there until they let him in—for the doors all opened at the last. That one whose hinges had almost rusted off—that one, at last flew open, and the Great Light came in! The glorious presence entered and the unsightly spot was transformed into a palace. There was no more need of the sun—for the Lamb, who is the "Light thereof," was there. And there was not anything allowed within it that defileth or that maketh a lie. The tears were wiped away from their eyes. All things had become new; and the glory and the sweetness rested upon all.

CHAPTER XIV.

NUPTIALS.

Speak it not lightly!—'tis a holy thing,
A bond enduring through long distant years,
When joy o'er thine abode is hovering,
Or when thine eye is wet with bitterest tears.

—*Anon.*

IT was evening. Richard Winthrop sat in his office study writing. The effort seemed to cost him a good deal of trouble. It was strange, for ordinarily words flowed with marvelous facility under his hand, forming themselves into sentences and paragraphs like fine mosaic work.

To-night, however, he stopped often, laying down his pen and reviewing what he had written, lapsing into meditation only to recall himself again to his task with an expression of firmness about his delicately chiseled lips. But this carefulness need not be deplored, for he was engaged in a very difficult matter—the writing of a letter which was to express the purest gratitude with the sincerest congratulations and the highest esteem, without betraying a single minor note of personal disappointment or as yet unrestrained adoration.

Richard Winthrop did not wish to intrude upon sacred ground, but begged leave to empty his alabaster box just outside the gate. If he could never dream of having Eunice as his wife, he longed for

the supreme privilege of giving her his best friendship. Of course he did not even intimate these things in words; but being a skilled master of expression, he conveyed the idea of his unconditioned wish in such a way that Eunice felt strangely honored.

He felt that their soul-searching conversation of a few weeks previous had made this letter a necessity; but it was the only relief which he allowed himself. It was comparatively easy after this to send a cordial greeting to his friend, Ernest Radcliffe, congratulating him upon his rare prospects.

"I could never have been worthy," he murmured, vainly, endeavoring to restrain his wandering thoughts, after the letters were sealed, and he had placed an open book before him on his desk. "How dull I am!" he continued, trying to smile at himself. "I have proved that statement over and over again, and it was decided without appeal; and yet the question keeps coming up like the ghost of a murdered friend, never to be banished. If it will not be banished, it shall be conquered. I will be totally impervious to it. It shall not drive me away. No; I am no coward, whatever else I am." After a moment, he added: "If I should go to Europe." "But, of course, I would not think of going away. Shall the child run away from its mother, because she denies him something? No; he may whimper and grieve as much as he likes, but he will not long hide away from the loving, maternal arms. Her commonest, friendly word will be to me what wifely advice is to other men. There is no ban upon that—for that is no relationship of

this world—and even God permits spirit to attract spirit toward himself."

There was a far-away look in his eyes as he dwelt on this thought, and his clear-cut features bore the imprint of determination. The type of Richard Winthrop's face was indeed noble, with something of the Grecian cast intermingled.

His intellectual growth had been greatly influenced by the Greek art and literature. Fredonia, his sister, called him an "American Greek," as he returned from abroad after several years, spent chiefly in Greece.

"I love their language, and literature, and art," he answered; "but I am no Grecian patriot. America-Columbia is the modern Greece. For her let me live and die!"

As this eloquent outburst was relieved by an easy smile, Fredonia had no fears of his immediate martyrdom—either social or political.

Richard Winthrop's professional life hitherto had not prevented him from becoming thoroughly conversant with Greek and English literature. Indeed he had devoted himself to the securing of a broad and liberal education.

"I will lay the foundation broad and deep," he once confessed to his sister; "that will be more to me than an early start in practice." Then, with a smile, he added, "A statesman must have a long preparation."

"Richard might be a statesman; but he never will; his nature is too indolent." So Fredonia had said, just before her brother's trip to the old world.

But Richard really surprised her, when he actually took up his profession.

Three weeks from the time the letter was written there was a wedding; and Richard Winthrop's gift arrived full early. It was the gem of the collection, and consisted of two pieces—a rare oil painting and a quaint Grecian vase. The guests were not many; only the nearest friends of the bride and groom. There was to be an informal reception at Milston, from which place the newly wedded pair were to go to Mr. Radcliffe's home in New England for a few weeks and then to New York, where they were to live.

Eunice wore a gown of pure white, and carried snowy lilies. She had no veil, but a wreath of white rose-buds was twined in her hair. The ceremony was performed in the "confidence room," much to Lena's dissatisfaction; but afterward the bridal company moved to Garton's dining hall for refreshments. It was a quiet, hallowed, joyous occasion, on a sunny morning in early August.

To say that no murmur of discord broke upon the atmosphere of that fine August morning, is not to assert that tranquility was universal. It does not even imply that all of the guests had come away from disturbing thoughts.

Richard Winthrop indeed had fought a battle; but had come off victorious at early dawn. The warfare waged all night long in the midst of the cloud-darkened camp, but just as the first sun-rays pierced the shrouded east, ushering in the glorious day, so the rays of hope scattered the shadows from his and heralded a new epoch in his life.

"Did you notice how white Richard looked during the ceremony?" asked Lena, as she and Garton were reviewing the day when all was over. "But I never saw such a gleam as there was in his eyes. It seemed to rejoice in the match, as if he were looking down in benediction from heaven, or at least somewhere above this world. I cannot understand Richard at all," she added, in a slightly injured tone. "He has taken it so differently from what I expected, and yet I am sure he was terribly disappointed."

"Richard has certainly changed," Garton remarked, thoughtfully. "Perhaps this will be the making of him."

"The making of him!" exclaimed Lena in wonder and reproof; "what do you mean, Garton? We say that of people who are not already just as nice as they can be."

There was a reproachful coloring on the last few words.

"Oh, Lena!" returned Garton, with pretended petulance; "Richard is not absolute perfection, I suppose, and disappointment is sometimes good for a man. It makes him realize that life is earnest."

"Isn't it a pity that you were not disappointed in the same way!"

Here was the first show of temper in Lena that Garton had witnessed since their marriage. But it immediately relapsed into tears of mingled penitence and injury when Garton drew her into his arms in token of tender reproof and reconciliation.

Lena's exclamation set Garton's thoughts astir;

and the question as to whether or not it would have been better had he himself suffered disappointment in love was stifled with a negative, a negative born of overpowering affection, but a negative that almost seemed selfish in view of what his own weakness and suffering might have been. It all ended in his greater pity and reverence for Richard Winthrop.

But Garton did not have much occasion to show his sympathy, as Richard Winthrop's ambition in professional lines suddenly drew him out of society —a fact which was much deplored by his friends.

"He, so cultured and bright," one young woman remarked; "and whatever he believes, his religious views are never disagreeably prominent."

She did not know, however, that Mr. Winthrop's "religious views" would have been the theme uppermost in his mind, had he accepted the pressing invitations which awaited him every evening. Perhaps it was his correct taste which led him to see that he was not at that time a fit subject for social life.

He now spent many of his leisure hours in the study of religious literature; but he was not looking for "views"—he was searching for the truth. Instead of the Greek dramatists, he read his Greek Testament, and was amazed to find how thrilled he was by its graphic simplicity and clear depths. To be sure he had studied it before as a piece of literature. He had even tried to accept its teaching in entirety.

"I have not left one stone unturned," he had once said in explanation of what he termed his "necessitated belief."

But he was now viewing it in a different light. He was looking for that personality which some one had told him embodied the truth, which he, seeing only abstractions, could not feel.

"Yes; I feel a personality; but is it any more than *her* personality which helps me to understand the Gospels? Is the personality of this Christ any more than a figment in which I read her character?" he asked himself, constantly, while doubt lurked at his elbow.

"O God, if thou art a personal God, open my eyes that I may see thee as such!" was his prayer, as he read on and on, fascinated as never before, by this Christ—the man of Nazareth.

"Can it be?" The wonderful possibility began to dawn upon his mind, as he spent night after night poring over the beautiful words.

At last there came a night when he said:

"*Is* it any more than *her* personality that I feel?" Under the constraint of this question he again took up John, and the slowly dawning light crept into his mind, and doubt forever took its flight. So quietly did the Sun of Righteousness shine forth that he hardly knew when the change came; but this one thing he knew, that whereas it had been twilight, it was now noon; what had hitherto been obscure, he now could understand.

The marriage of Ernest Radcliffe and Eunice Olway then was destined to affect other lives as well as their own. The fact that Mr. Radcliffe was to leave Milston Center, with its prosperous outpost, Milston, was sadly deplored by all concerned. But, of course, it was not possible that the "Mil-

ston people" should be so favored as to retain two such people as Mr. and Mrs. Radcliffe; and they had sufficient confidence in their pastor to believe that he was following a plain call of God. Yet the reception which they tendered the young couple in the recently dedicated church, was an occasion of sadness to many who were present.

All their old friends were there, and many more. The Milston Center people had heartily responded to the invitation to join in honoring their common pastor at the Milston new church. Their common loss promoted unity; and petty jealousy was destroyed, as it was sure to be, by the birth of a like enterprising spirit at Milston Center.

"What did I tell you?" remarked one young girl to another, as they whispered arm in arm in the crowded aisle. "I knew even he would not have come over here so much if she had not been here."

"Well, we could not help it," sighed the other. "Isn't she lovely, anyway?" Maud ejaculated.

"Yes; everybody thinks it is just right. Charlie was just wild when he heard of it; and he has not given me a minute's peace since with his, 'I told you so! I told you so!'" Nellie answered, in an injured tone.

"Now, see here, Nell, it is of no use!" said Maud; "you might as well admire the moon, if you can't have it."

They were on their way to offer congratulations.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Doty was performing her duty in that particular. She even went so far as to drag the reluctant Peter along with her. As she held out her plump hand and laughed, she said:

"You are the happiest couple I have seen in a long time. As I said to Pete, 'They both are the best we have known; and the best is good enough for the best!'"

Others were waiting for a handshake; and Peter, the silent, opened his lips:

"There is no need to tell them that, Mrs. Doty. You better tell them something they won't believe. You jest wait a sp-e-ll!" he drawled, winking and grinning back at Mr. Radcliffe in his droll way, as he passed away to make room for others.

The honest wishes of these country people, so crudely and often ludicrously expressed, were very dear to the two hearts recently made one; and when they saw the tears kept back so bravely in loving eyes, they had much difficulty in controlling themselves. The noble band of young people who had been in Eunice's Bible-school, expressed their mingled love and regret at the parting in the offering of a beautiful gift.

This was a momentous affair for Milston, and was long remembered both by old and young. Among the most interested were John and Harriet Blake, with their son James, who came home for the occasion.

James was quite a fine-looking young man now. His awkwardness was less marked, and his honest black eyes were as bright as ever.

"He is a favorite of the minister," a woman said, as she watched the greeting. "Well, he is a fine lad, and from what I hear, the minister has done a good deal for him—about his schooling, you know. Ah! he is speaking to that Vinie Parkes. Harriet

Blake won't like that. I have heard her speak slightingly of the girl. But no telling—she is very bright, and perhaps she and James may make a match yet."

The meeting of James and Vina had been anticipated by both, and planned with deliberation by Vina. She had arranged just how she should act; rather coldly at first, for James had been very indifferent, and she wished to show him that his treatment was nothing to her. But she was confident that James could not withstand her long, and she only meant to tease him awhile and make him see, if possible, that he need not be so sure of her preference for himself.

This monolgue had occurred as she was preparing for the ride to Milston after the wedding; but when she looked into the glass for the last time, a tear crept into her eye as she said: "I will not be frivolous any more, James. Perhaps I may seem to be, just to bother you, but——" she did not finish.

But her purpose changed, as the premises which led to it had altered. James was very cordial and tender, not even noticing her feigned coolness.

"I came just to see you," he was saying. "Vinie, I have been kept away so long, but nothing shall keep me any longer, although I must wait years before——"

Their prolonged greeting was becoming noticeable; and Vina, seeing the amusing side of it, and moreover, feeling greatly relieved, drew her hand away, and remarked, coquettishly, finishing his sentence for him:

"Before you can call upon an old friend?" But

when she saw the disappointment in his face, she added, soberly: "Don't fear, James, I am not frivolous any more. I—could not be—I have had too much trouble," and her lips trembled visibly.

He was touched to the quick.

"Forgive me, Vinie; your trouble has all been mine; and I have longed to comfort you. But I have trusted God to do it, and he has given me the assurance that he would. You do forgive me?" he pleaded, anxiously.

As Vina looked up and whispered "yes," she did not know whether she was more happy or sad.

But now Mr. and Mrs. Blake came up and spoke kindly to her, and then all passed on.

Mr. Radcliffe had contrived to keep the father and mother talking as long as possible that James might have an opportunity to speak with Vina; and it was not difficult, for Mrs. Blake had a good deal to say, and moreover, had not at first caught sight of Vina.

"Well, I have hoped for this, but did not dare expect it," she said, adding: "I had hoped against our losing you, and now you are going—well! It is ever so, and of course it is for the best, somehow. Oh, how glad I shall be when we get to that place where there are no partings!"

"Yes; Mrs. Blake, partings are grievous, but we trust we are to meet here again, you know; but if not, surely there. Now you must come down and see us when we get established—you really must," Mr. Radcliffe returned.

"Certainly," added Mrs. Radcliffe, emphasizing

the invitation with warmth; "James has promised to come and bring you."

Mrs. Blake smiled, and John said it was very doubtful.

And thus their friends came to greet them, and then passed along to make room for others—a symbol of our meetings in this life's journey. But all wished them success and happiness, and prophesied the fulfillment of their wishes.

Whether or not these bright hopes were to be realized lay in the keeping of the future.

CHAPTER XV.

A QUEER SOCIETY MAN.

I slept and dreamed that life was Beauty;
I woke and found that life was Duty.
Was my dream then a shadowy lie?
Toil on, poor heart, unceasingly;
And thou shall find thy dream to be
A truth and noontide light to thee.

—*Ellen Sturgis Hooper.*

YEARS passed. Six gay seasons had circled by, and now the seventh brilliant winter campaign was about to open in Washington.

Mr. Richard Winthrop was in his private room in one of those fine, spacious, old-fashioned houses which belong only to a few of the oldest families of Washington. It was an elegant mansion, standing in stately pride, and somewhat hidden from the broad avenue by the protecting branches of some tall, old trees. Richard Winthrop sat back in his chair, and appeared to be musing over the contents of a letter which lay open on his knee. One hand still pressed its leaves softly as if in veneration.

As he sat there, resting one elbow on the chair-arm and supporting his temple with his palm, he would have made an interesting study for an artist. There was nothing of the old cultured indolence in his attitude of meditation, but it would have taken a careful observer to note any change in his dress

or personal appearance which seven years had wrought. There was the same scrupulous neatness, the same plain refinement, the same indefinable polish. True, the richness of his auburn hair was made even more lustrous by an intermingling of silver gleams; but his face—there was the change! Wherein the difference consisted was hard to tell. A subtle something had stolen into the chiselled features, illuminating them as with some inward transparency, and glowing like quickened embers in his tranquil blue eyes. A more thoughtful gravity also was upon his lips, as though sweet melancholy were his companion during his solitary hours.

"It is truly marvelous," he murmured. "She shines with an ever-increasing luster—they there: I here—but the same life in His sight!"

His eyes closed; and he became perfectly still again, until a tap at his door recalled him to the present, and a maid entered and asked if he would be pleased to come to the drawing room.

In the broad hall, as he started to obey the summons, he encountered his sister, Mrs. Morange.

"Oh, Richard!" she said, as he took her hand in one of his and overclasped it with the other. "Will you come to the drawing room? There are only a few to-night, a select few; among them, one Mademoiselle Lasée. She is very anxious to meet my brother."

Fredonia spoke with some hesitation, not knowing how her brother would decide. Through his letters she had learned of his almost entire withdrawal from society and of his having joined an

evangelical church. Of his steady rise to public notice, and his espousal of the most ideal principles of his party, she had heard in other ways. If he had not taken this stand, she would have expected to see him senator.

"My American-Greek patriot, Richard, posing as reformer! But, after all, it is just what I might have anticipated."

Yet Richard Winthrop had been very busy those days. He put his best energy into the struggle, and though the contest was close, he came off victorious after all. So he had come to spend the winter with his sister in Washington; but he had only just recently arrived.

Before asking her question, Fredonia thought it well over. "He is the same dear Richard; and yet he is different too, someway. He is a perpetual mystery to me. I am never quite sure any more what he will comply with, or what he will just quietly refuse. But I do hope he will not hide himself from society."

There was a peculiar tenderness between these two, which had existed from early childhood. Their natures were similar only in outline, so to speak; but Fredonia almost worshiped her brother, and made of him an idol which she justified herself in retaining on the ground that he was her only brother, and that she had no children.

Richard smiled, and there was a gleam of the old playfulness in his eyes, which reassured her.

"May I come as reformer?" he asked. "You know I can never deteriorate into being simply agreeable in society. I may prove a very unwel-

come guest—to the others. I cannot promise to be a favorite among such a select company. However, Fredonia," and his eyes beamed with brotherly affection, "I will go in gladly, if you will not expect me to talk animated nonsense."

"Richard! who ever heard you talk nonsense? Well, yes," she admitted, after a pause; "perhaps you used to do so occasionally—the animated sort, but even that always sounded like sense. Your Greek accent transformed it, I suppose. Besides, a little nonsense now and then is relished by the best of men."

"No, Fredonia; real fashionable nonsense was never relished by the *best* of men."

And she understood what he meant. The thought remained with her for a long time after they entered the drawing room; and indeed occurred to her again in her room at night in the shape of a question.

"Is it true? Does Richard believe that, and is that why he is so changed? Whoever would have dreamed that a change in his belief would make Richard so radical. Yet, is he radical? He is not what I have usually understood by the term. It is a mystery. But I am so glad he is here, though the whole house has changed since he came."

Fredonia's husband, Robert Morange, was a wealthy, middle-aged judge, who, however staid he might be in the court-room, was fond of society, and especially of his club-life. He had married Fredonia for her beauty, for she was a great belle when she met Mr. Morange, the distinguished judge. Her features bore a likeness to Richard's, only that

they were more delicate; and indeed she was said to be "beautiful as a dream" when she first "came out." Now, however, she was more matronly, but presided gracefully over his home, which was all her husband desired from his wife.

Their married life had been tranquil, but not ideally happy. If Mrs. Morange was not fully satisfied, she at least thought that she was. Society, music, and art divided her attention. As she had no children to claim her affection, its abundant overflow was bestowed upon her brother; and, therefore, she had no desire that Richard should marry. To have him with her in Washington had long been her dream. But now that her dream was realized, she had a little regret.

"Perhaps it is not right; but really there is no one good enough for him. Few of the beautiful women are cultured enough, and many of the cultured ones are so plain. Of course I do not know what he may choose to do; yet he clings to me still with the same old boyish fondness, and more since dear mother's death." A glad smile wreathed her face with beauty; but she saddened as she said to herself, "How he worshiped mother! I should think it was mother's death that changed him, if I had not noticed it before, when they were here together that last time."

Fredonia had not been so thoughtful after a social evening since that sad time.

"Somehow, Richard makes me think of such things. It all seemed different to-night. How noble he appeared. I am so proud of him. They were all charmed, I could see in a moment. Richard

is a born society man of the highest type, and I shall simply not let him hide his light under a bushel." This phrase struck her as a very bright thought. "When I put it in that light it will be irresistible," she said.

Richard evidently did not intend to "hide his light," as he made no objection to being present on nearly every social occasion in the house, and sometimes even went out with his sister. Of course the diplomatic receptions could not be neglected, and they occupied a good deal of his time. The Empire State's senator naturally had much on his mind, especially as questions involving social and moral reforms were before the people. The responsibility weighed heavily; but he liked its weight. He felt with patriotic pride the glory of being a pivot, however small, on which a nation's welfare might turn; for he had a growing interest in the American Republic, and had served his country as an officer from his own State in her time of need.

Now it appeared that Richard Winthrop was not altogether without interest in Washington society. Fredonia soon began to almost wish that he would take less interest. Could it be that he had found some fair woman who possessed more than ordinary attraction for him?"

One evening, ignoring a large reception, a select coterie of friends met at Morange Hall. Mademoiselle Lasée, the bright, young Frenchwoman, was present. In the course of the evening she and Mr. Winthrop were thrown together, and conversed entirely in French; the latter being an accom-

plished linguist. The topic of music, being of mutual interest, was soon introduced, and Mademoiselle Lasée said:

"I perceive that you are a true musical critic, and show an unusual familiarity with the composers and their works. That is rare for you Americans —I mean the sort of acquaintance you have— not simply that you have heard them many times, but that you have heard and understood. But your sister has the same appreciation; I suppose it runs in the family?"

Mademoiselle Lasée was very lovely and was always gowned in the best of taste. She also possessed a remarkably sweet voice, which had received the finest training. There was no necessity demanding the use of this rare gift for monetary ends, and so she sang for her own pleasure or that of her friends. The timbre of her voice was of a peculiarly sweet character, and the tone-color was susceptible of the finest gradations of shade.

"My sister has all the musical ability in the present house of Winthrop," was the reply; "and my appreciation comes largely from being with her. Later, however, I caught the spirit of music from some one else. There is music that has a soul and music that has not; or at best, only a dead soul; is it not so?"

"Truly, monsieur, you talk just as my old master used to talk. He used to say: 'Oh, mademoiselle! let out the soul, let out the soul! That is very well for a shade or an echo, but we want the living soul.' My master was an Italian," she added, in explanation; "but when he failed to make an Italian out

of me, he gave me up. He said my voice was fascinating, but it was too thoroughly French to suit him." She made this confession with the charming *naïveté* of her sex and race.

Many people thought Mademoiselle Lasée herself was dangerously fascinating; and when Fredonia perceived upon whom the heiress was bestowing her sweetest smiles, she was really quite concerned. But she had more tact than to interfere openly, at least for the present.

Richard Winthrop and Mademoiselle Lasée had met very often during the winter, and the latter made acquaintances very easily. So that by this time they talked quite familiarly.

"The way in which I learned to look for a spirit in music was by finding that a certain beautiful voice interpreted an equally beautiful character," Mr. Winthrop continued. "That cannot be a perfectly sure index to follow, of course, generally speaking; but I believe the voice is intended to express the soul within; and when it expresses a God-like soul, there is no power on earth like it. It surely brings heaven down to touch our hearts with its cleansing fire." He spoke with unusual fervor, and a sad tenderness beamed in his eyes.

"You must have been in love," asseverated Mademoiselle Lasée, with her French directness. But as she met his gaze she stopped, with a certain awe. After a moment she added, rather meekly: "You never said there was a soul in my voice. Indeed, I see you do not praise as other men. To be frank, you have piqued me." In thought she added: "But I will make you feel my power yet.

My voice may not be like the other voice"; and she felt a slight twinge of jealousy; "but it shall influence you. It shall be my one object in America to influence this man, this one strange man, this one most fascinating man." She had aimed at a like conquest many times before with unfailing success; but then Mr. Winthrop was different from any one she had ever met. "Well! so much the more interesting," she thought. With a smile, she asked aloud: "Will you tell me honestly whether you feel any soul in my voice?"

He looked at her out of his calm, fathomless blue eyes, and answered slowly:

"I trust there is a soul behind those exquisite, flute-like tones. It may lie sleeping yet, but it is there—a rare beautiful jewel, which turns all things to gold when it is in the hands of the Great Philosopher."

She had not anticipated such words, and she felt that her slight hold over him was vanishing. Her charms seemed of little value to her just then. "I cannot understand it," she thought; "he is getting me under his power—and such a strange power! Of all fascinating men this is the rarest; but he almost makes me quake at times. He seems to see into my very heart. Is it possible that he can read my thoughts?" She hesitated a moment. "Some of these Americans are wonderful, and so different from us."

She determined to try another turn. "There is at least a heart, monsieur. If it is sleeping, it is only waiting to be awakened. You remember the story of the beautiful prince?"

Richard Winthrop was somewhat surprised at the question, but answered :

"I was thinking rather of a more beautiful story, where a soul awoke to a vision of itself in the presence of its Maker."

This conversation occurred after Mademoiselle Lasée had finished a song. Mr. Winthrop had turned the leaves of the music for her, as he had often done before ; and between the songs they usually talked while she was resting. Mademoiselle Lasée had shown much cordiality to him ever since they had met ; and while he did not court her favor, yet he had never openly evaded her.

Just at this point Mrs. Morange came up with another lady and gentleman, and all begged for another song. Richard Winthrop very easily made his escape, leaving his honors to the other man, and approaching his sister with his usual courtesy, talked with her and Mrs. Bowne until the next musical number began. Mrs. Bowne was a rich middle-aged widow, whose husband had been adjutant-general in the southern army ; and Mr. Winthrop always enjoyed conversing with her—the more perhaps because it excited no jealousy. Even Fredonia was willing to trust him with her.

Now as she watched his apparent indifference at leaving the Frenchwoman, and his evident interest in the widow, Mrs. Morange, thought :

"Why need I trouble myself ? Richard could never be deceived. Yet, he never seems to be conscious of himself at all, and he might get involved before he realized it with any one like her." She almost determined to ignore the French heiress

entirely, but concluded that it would be too noticeable. "No; I shall simply watch her for Richard's sake." She would not admit to herself that she would have been just as solicitous had the woman in question been entirely to her taste.

Mr. Morange had also noticed Mademoiselle Lasée's marked preference, but with no anxiety for Richard. He read the latter with a man's insight, and smiled at the possible misunderstanding between these two. Robert Morange had not lived in the world for nothing. He prided himself on being both in and of the world. A Southerner on his mother's side, but a Northerner by his father's blood, he partook of the nature of both. Indolent in appearance he was active in brain, chivalrous toward women, but without real domestic tenderness. His ideal woman was a sort of fragile flower, to be sheltered and admired—not loved as a being like himself; and any woman that fell below this ideal was lightly esteemed by him.

He, therefore, envied his brother-in-law the opportunity for amusement which was offered in the person of Mademoiselle Lasée.

"But Winthrop will never take advantage of it, with his queer puritan notions," Mr. Morange thought, one evening. "Yet his absurd sincerity in these same high notions is the very richest kind of amusement, when contrasted with the Frenchwoman's hypocrisy. I like to sit outside and observe the foibles and eccentricities of men. It is all the relaxation a man needs. But the earnestness which it assumes in some minds, women's especially, is most ridiculous—as if it were not over

in a day, and gone forever. After all, life does not amount to much, except—oh, of course, right is right, and all that, but it is all a dream, a shadow—at least we are very uncertain of anything beyond, whatever Winthrop may say. To live honestly and deal justly is the thing to do here; and I have always done it, chiefly because I promised father that I would."

But now again the words came back which Richard Winthrop had uttered in answer to a challenge from him given in a joking way. The challenge called for the definition of an atheist; and Richard Winthrop's response caused at least a few of his hearers to think in lines that would not be dismissed.

"If there is a personal God, there is a personal immortality. No denier of immortality acknowledges a personal God; and he who denies a personal God is an atheist; and an atheist is a blind dependent—of all men most miserable; blind because he wills it, and is willing to be blind. Such a man deserves to be pitied."

It was seldom that the subject of religious beliefs was discussed even ever so lightly. When serious questions were indulged in, the intricacies of politics whetted the minds of these men and women. But the general range of conversation was usually too broad to be thus limited, for there were many fluent talkers, especially among the women.

Although he moved in the busy life of Washington, both in its outer and inner circles, Richard Winthrop did not forget his old friends of the past. He frequently paid a visit to Garton and Lena Ol-

way, and had come to be Dora's veritable knight-errant. Her girlish devotion was such as a maiden delights to pour at the feet of some hero, about whom her fancy has woven a beautiful romance. Dora wrote charming little letters to "Uncle Richard," who was attending to the country's welfare at Washington. She almost looked upon him as the second father of his country, and was eager to strew flowers in his pathway whenever he should return.

Hollis sometimes added a postscript to Dora's letters in his bold chirography; once to the effect that he himself would come to Washington some day, and perform whatever Uncle Richard failed to accomplish. He knew one thing which he should do when he got there, and that was to put "lady teachers" in every grade of the schools, because they were "so much nicer." One cannot but observe that his ideas on the woman question had undergone a radical change. The secret, however, lay in the fact that he had lately passed from Vina's considerate supervision to a strange man's impartial tutelage in the public schools, and the contrast had put an edge upon his feelings.

Mrs. Garton Olway was beginning to think that she had been mistaken about Richard Winthrop's love for Eunice; but Garton knew through Ernest Radcliffe of Mr. Winthrop's wonderful generosity toward him in his work, and traced it to a possible source.

Without mentioning the fact to Mrs. Olway, he said to himself: "Whatever the cause is, it has effected great liberality in all directions, for al-

though he tries to conceal it, I know of Richard's gifts to various benevolences; and since he joined the church no one has done more for the mission cause, both at home and abroad. He puts me to open shame." Garton did not try to remember his own increased subscriptions. "That sister of mine," he went on, "has wrought wonders in her way. I believe she will make missionaries of us all yet, Lena herself included; that is, in spirit and offerings, for we all cannot go abroad."

This was just after he had received a letter from Ernest Radcliffe with an enclosed sheet from Eunice.

"How she takes everything!" he meditated. "Not a shade of sadness in her words. Now if we had lost Dora, Lena would have despaired, I believe, and I——. But Eunice only says that God loved little Olway better than they, and so he took him to dwell in his greater love. Yet Ernest did say that for a time Eunice almost had no power to live. It was a fearful blow for them both!"

CHAPTER XVI.

CONTRASTS.

The best
Impart the gift of seeing to the rest.
—*Sordello.*

A LARGE assembly had gathered in a spacious hall in New York City, and was eagerly waiting the next word of the speaker. He had evidently finished speaking, however, and was turning toward the rear of the platform, where the chorus of singers was seated. At this sign a woman came forward with a sheet of music in her hand. Then all eyes were riveted upon her, for many had listened to her before, and if their motives for coming that night had been examined, the fact would have been discovered in most cases that the "wonderful singer" had attracted them.

Need it be said that it was Eunice Olway Radcliffe herself, who stood there in her plain gray gown, and modest hat of the same soft hue. She was more mature than before her marriage, and her face had a riper loveliness; but she was the same Eunice who had sung to the children in the hospital, and thrilled her listeners at that memorable missionary tea eight years before.

Instead of diminishing, her voice had gained in power and richness, and the full, pure tones seemed

Eunice. Page 225.

only to glorify the clear-cut words. It was a simple sacred song that pictured the love and agony of the Man of God, whose great, broken heart yearned over the wayward souls of men with longings that could not be uttered. As the last note floated out, every eye seemed to see him standing there; the Man who was crowned with thorns, now transformed into the Saviour, who was "altogether lovely, and the chiefest among ten thousand."

To describe the effect of ordinary music is not easy; but to portray the breathless hush, the final sigh, the tear-dimmed eyes, and the uplifted features of an immense assembly of people is denied to human pen. One who has never witnessed such a scene can form no adequate idea of the picture there that night.

But now something else was about to happen. Ernest Radcliffe, whose presence had lost none of its personal magnetism, but was made more winning by an added benignity of countenance, now introduced a speaker with fitting words.

The woman, who then stepped forward, needed little introduction to such an assembly, for they had heard her many times before, but no expression of weariness was visible on their faces as she arose. She was a tall, slender woman, with her hair combed back smoothly under a black bonnet. Her movements were quick and her manner somewhat dramatic; but the long black gown was severely plain. She possessed a penetrating voice of limited range, and well modulated. It occasionally broke as if it had been overstrained; but she threw her whole energy into her words and held her audience spellbound from the very beginning.

In very graphic words she gave a glimpse into her past life; how she had been helped and a hope stirred within her for better things by the presence and love of a little child; how Christ, from his infinite love, had looked upon her, pitied her, helped her, and accepted her as his own. Then she added an earnest plea that each one present should prove this never-failing love and accept Christ as his or her personal Saviour.

When Celia Parkes sat down, Ernest Radcliffe lifted his voice in earnest prayer. After a few thrilling sentences, he called for some short, vocal prayers from either the platform or the audience. Not a single listener withdrew. Then he and his corps of workers passed among the people as here and there one signified his desire to live a better life and accept Christ as his personal Saviour. Thus it was every evening: the room was filled, sometimes crowded, and the people heard the same earnest appeals, the same uplifting music, and listened to the story of the Christ's never-dying love.

Such was the work of Ernest and Eunice Radcliffe, aided by Celia Parkes, in a neglected quarter of New York City. Their lives were very busy ones. Tuesday and Thursday afternoons they devoted to the reception of their friends, from all conditions of society. Otherwise their time was divided into systematic work, interspersed with intervals of rest and home seclusion. Not a day passed in which some time was not devoted to the quiet blessedness of homemaking. After Olway was born, Eunice left the public mission work in Celia's hands, with the exception that she still sang at the

evening services. But with all this hard labor, Ernest's endurance knew no bounds, although Eunice was obliged to go home every year in order to recuperate. Mr. Radcliffe, however, only allowed himself two weeks in the heat of the summer.

On her "reception days" Eunice Radcliffe had a class of women who came to her for heart-to-heart talks, and ably seconded the noble effort to help the people, as they had been helped. After one such talk, Mrs. Radcliffe spoke to Celia Parkes, who was still in the room, saying:

"I think, Celia, there is another call for you in your prison work. Mrs. Norton said to me this afternoon that she had heard of a man who is a very troublesome prisoner; so much so that the keepers are disturbed, and no one seems to have any influence over him. She thought you might possibly want to try to help him, as you never have despaired even in the worst cases. I believe he had heard of you in some way, and seemed not averse to seeing you. That is what led her to mention it to me. I said I would speak to you, although I knew your time was overtaxed now, and Celia, I would not advise you to make a special attempt, unless you feel impressed that it is your duty."

"Did she say what sort of a man?" Celia asked, with a show of interest.

"No; nothing more definite than I have told you."

"I will think about it," Celia returned.

Just then Ernest Radcliffe came in.

"Dear, here is another grand letter from Richard,

with money for new hymn books. His gifts are not to be counted!"

Eunice's face beamed.

"There are not many men like Richard Winthrop, except Garton and Ernest, who is Richard Winthrop plus Garton Olway, and more than I can ever think besides," she declared, emphatically.

But even after eight years, she sometimes colored under her husband's gaze, especially when he spoke in praise of Richard Winthrop, and of his interest in their work. A faint blush came to her cheek now at the recurrence of a thought which had flashed upon her mind not long since in connection with Richard Winthrop's letter of congratulation. written so long ago. But she looked up at her husband with conscious rapture. No other man, even when she strove to be impartial, ever stood any higher than his shoulder. He always surpassed all others.

Ernest put the letter in her hand saying:

"You may read it. But I want to tell you that Richard says he may possibly run over to New York sometime by-and-by, when business is less pressing, and if he does, he would be delighted to look in on us again. He thinks possibly about Easter time. Does that suit, dear?" Then turning so as to include Celia in the pleasure of hospitable desires, he added: "Now, if we could only have a reunion here of all our friends about that time, I should be—simply too happy for utterance!"

Once in a great while there was a touch of boyishness about Ernest Radcliffe, and it impressed one as peculiar, because the manliness was usually

so prominent in his personality. Eunice had learned to regard it as a sign of overwork; therefore she arose immediately and persuaded him sit down in her chair, with his head upon the headrest, while she perched upon the arm and stroked his forehead, holding one hand over his eyes until he closed them in obedient silence. He, in turn, accepted this as a sign that Eunice had taken matters into her own hands, and that he was expected to submit, which he did without much reluctance.

"Major Dixon's," said a voice, as the footman was closing a carriage that stood at Morange Hall.

Senator Winthrop always accompanied his sister, as her husband now seldom found it convenient, his press of business keeping him detained until the last moment. The social engagement to which they were going was a semi-private affair.

Those present had met many times before and were quite familiar with each other. Mademoiselle Lasée was there, looking unusually attractive in a most becoming gown. As usual she was surrounded by a group of friends to whom she chatted brightly, now in her fluent French, and then in her quaint, half-broken English. However, to those who knew her best, she seemed *distrait*, and did not appear to the best advantage until the arrival of Mrs. Morange and her brother, Richard Winthrop.

"How beautiful Mrs. Morange must have been," remarked one gentleman to another, as she was greeted by the host and hostess.

"When?" asked the other. "Certainly not in her youth, for she is young now."

"Oh, I know you think Mrs. Morange is loveliness personified, but I knew her when she was far more beautiful. As to her youth, she is not old, to be sure, but her brother is several years her junior."

"Impossible! He looks at least ten years older."

"The women can challenge time to touch them, while we men have to succumb at the dawn of manhood," returned the older gentleman, as they approached two women. "We were just commenting on the youthfulness of a certain lady present," he explained, "who is to my knowledge much older than her brother. But the latter, as Mr. Taunton remarks, looks to be ten years her senior. It is a magic beauty has, I suppose?"

"I know whom you mean," answered the younger woman, with unconcealed delight, which belied the sad tones of the words which followed; "but alas! we all have not that magic charm. However, you men claim all the wisdom, and that makes you brave and old, I suppose. One cannot have everything," she added, gayly. "But as for Senator Winthrop, he is simply precociously mature!"

"You are too bad," he returned, as the woman turned to move away.

"Whatever there is about it, the women all adore Winthrop you see, Taunton. There is your model if you want the plaudits of the fair sex. To be sure, Winthrop is handsome, in his way, and all that; but beauty alone does not attract women. Take my word for it! He might be a veritable Apollo, and the modern woman would make fun of him. You see I know it isn't all beauty that wins

the belle. I am a husband myself, you know, and Juliette knows she did not marry me for my Roman nose."

The younger man laughed, and the other went on:

"Let me tell you what Juliette said, when I asked her why all the women were so charmed with Winthrop. 'Oh, he is like Bayard, *sans peur et sans reproche*. He is a modern King Arthur. He draws you out of yourself, and then shows you some beautiful vision of which you have dreamed all your life, but never caught a glimpse of before. He just lives in that ideal realm all the while.' When I said, 'Pshaw! that is woman's nonsense; Winthrop is a man like the rest of us—an every-day, live, flaw-picking senator; and though he debates like a major, he will not yield a point when he thinks he is right,' she just laughed and declared that I was 'the obtusest man; for, of course, that was just what Mr. Winthrop was, a *man*, with all the other nonsense (like a halo about his head); and that was just the reason why she and every other right-minded woman admired him. Such a man ought to be put on a pedestal.'"

"I declare, it is worth getting married just to learn something about the sex," commented his companion.

"Ah! you are wrong there, my unsophiscated innocent," he answered, in his drollest manner. "When you are married, you are more blind than ever, so that the other advantage does not count."

These two congenial men were walking toward a group of other men, when dinner was announced,

and each taking a partner, the guests entered the dining room.

Returning to the reception room, and moving among those present, Richard Winthrop encountered Mademoiselle Lasée, who had been requested to sing. He moved with her toward the piano. Their conversation was as usual, gay and bright on her part, while he revealed the clear depths of serious reflection, which always lay underneath the ripple of wit or pleasantry that occasionally gleamed upon the surface. As they neared the instrument, she said something which made him look very grave.

"I look to you, monsieur, as a hunted maiden might look to her sworn knight, for protection," she whispered.

"Protection from what, Mademoiselle Lasée," he queried, paternally. "Yourself?"

"No, no, monsieur," she said, with some impatience; "from these devouring wolves," making a quick gesture toward the group surrounding the piano, and smiling up into his face.

"There are wolves in sheep's clothing—ravening wolves," he replied, in a low voice; "but these are not such. They are rather the lambs which are being ruthlessly slaughtered." His searching glance had in it now no admiration, only a sort of tender pity. "Mademoiselle Lasée," he continued, with earnestness; "I must tell you openly that I have no preference for this sort of thing. Life to me is too real to be made the stage for comedy only. If we are to be friends, I must meet your true self. There is no friendship outside of that. I would

gladly be your friend; I would gladly help you to protection from your real foes, if I were able; but until you can respond to such friendliness we had better part. I speak thus plainly, because I am sure of whom I am addressing—you can trust me never to betray you, but do not suppose that I am ignorant of such things."

Richard Winthrop was aware that he was treading on very dangerous ground, but he was confident what the effect would be.

Mademoiselle Lasée flushed, looked down, then up again, with a new light in her eyes. But she only said:

"I trust you, monsieur, for you do seem to be my friend. And I need such a friend. You have shown me that I am far below your ideal. Oh! if some one had only talked in this way to me before. But no! no one ever did, or perhaps ever cared to, before I met you. The others never seemed to think of such things. You will be my friend? You will not contemn me altogether?" she questioned.

But they were at the piano, and it was time for her to sing. The satellites, paradoxical as it may sound, were becoming uneasy in their orbits, and some one in the farther end of the room was remarking, *sotto voce:*

"Now that Mr. Winthrop is by her side, we may wait for the song."

Just then a chord on the instrument was struck, and a moment later rang out her clear, flute-like notes. It was a minor selection from an opera, and burst upon the gay listeners like a pitiful appeal.

Her companion was amazed; his face slowly lighted up with real pleasure. Like Undine, she had found her soul at last.

When Richard Winthrop went into the public fray to work for the glory of his country, he did it much as the knights of old espoused some noble cause. The beautiful revelation which elucidated for him his life's mystery, as he sat poring over his Greek Testament, eight years ago, did not beckon him away from his already chosen career; but instead shed a new lustre upon it, as if a radiance from above streamed on the path before him, revealing the needs of a peculiar service, that demanded a heroism, the very intangibility of which gave it a new attraction to his eyes. But, as he had even then foreseen, the reality proved to be a dearly bought pleasure. He said to himself again and again that it would have been easier to work a lifetime in the slums. But when his ideal life seemed impossible, the conviction always came: "There is the need, and thou art the man. Hardly another will see the need, therefore the responsibility rests upon thee." To him this was a personal commission, and again he would press forward with new courage, leaving the shattered fragments of his doubts behind him.

"I believe her example has shaped my lifework!" Richard Winthrop said to himself in his hour of secret meditation, one day about two weeks after the dinner at Major Dixon's. "At least, she struck the keynote to which my life's melody seems to have been set. Pre-established harmony again—I am growing Leibnitzian!" Sitting in his favorite

attitude, he gazed out across the park, as the leaves rustled in the gentle breeze, and added:

"She simply ignored everything but my better self, and feasted that with all she had, and the gift was bountiful; but there are other ways, though they incur more risk." The thought seemed to suggest something unpleasant, but he pursued the train relentlessly to the end. "What else was I to do? And if the spark may be kindled, what matters the effort it costs? Moreover the task seemed to be thrown across my path."

A small marble clock uttered a muffled chime: his "silent hour" had passed. Richard Winthrop never allowed any business affair to interrupt his sacred contemplations, but lived in another world, beyond the limitations of time and space, for a little while each day, until the low voice before him spoke its usual warning. He had grown to love that little clock-face, as if it had been a sort of companion—the guardian spirit of his study. With a smile at his own quaint superstition, he promptly addressed himself to his papers, and was soon lost in some subject of political investigation.

That night Mademoiselle Lasée's uncle gave a reception in honor of his niece. Monsieur Lasée had decided that they must soon begin their tour through America, and so they had decided to say "au revoir" to their many friends.

It was a very pleasant occasion, and much enjoyed by those present. Mademoiselle Lasée was determined that her friends should enjoy the evening, and spared no effort toward that end. She herself sang once or twice and had never acquitted herself

better. Her voice was sweet and clear, but there was an intangible improvement felt in the tones; what it was few, if any, knew.

Richard Winthrop heard, and smiled as he thought: "Yes, she has found her soul." However, he did not seek her society, nor did he avoid her, and yet Mademoiselle Lasée was vaguely annoyed.

"I wonder if he treats them all as he treats me," she thought, and then remembered hearing some one say that Mr. Winthrop never flattered. "At least he has promised to be my friend and to help me. I do wish he would come and talk with me awhile."

"Mademoiselle Lasée is going to favor us with another selection?" asked one of the group which always hovered near her. "Now do not break my heart by telling me that you would prefer some one else to turn your leaves, or perhaps to play your accompaniment."

She blushed slightly, but replied without coquetry:

"Your heart is broken more easily than I had supposed."

As the tones floated through the rooms that evening, they were heard with pleasure by all, and yet each one regretted that this would probably be the last opportunity to enjoy such a treat for some time.

Before Richard Winthrop withdrew that night, he of course had a conversation with Mademoiselle Lasée. He wished her pleasure on her journey; told her of many points of interest which must not

be missed; and added that he was pleased to be able to tell her sincerely that her voice now showed what he had hitherto felt that it lacked. As he was about to depart from her he offered his hand in a fatherly way, but she would not release it until she had said, speaking tremulously:

"Monsieur Winthrop, you are the first one who has ever read my heart. You have taught me much. Indeed, you have shown me that it is possible to be true and good; but, monsieur, you have taught me more than you intended to, I fear, for you have taught me that it is possible to love."

Then she turned to say farewell to others who were coming up, and he went away, surprised and troubled.

Fredonia had never found her brother so taciturn as when they drove home in the carriage that night. He seemed to be utterly lost in thought.

"I hope he is not falling in love." And she sighed with sisterly anxiety.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN OLD FOE.

It is a high, solemn, almost awful thought for every individual man, that his earthly influence, which has had a commencement, will never, through all ages, were he the very meanest of us, have an end! What is done is done; has already blended itself with the boundless, ever-living, ever-working Universe, and will also work there, for good or for evil, openly or secretly, throughout all time.—*Carlyle.*

THE same influence that led Richard Winthrop into the life he was now living, also gave an impetus to another life, which was being manifested under very different conditions and circumstances. But as the motive is the distinguishing mark of an idea, life is a unit wherever found if it bears the same essential character. The only difference, if it exists, is in degree.

When Eunice and Ernest Radcliffe entered the city mission work, Celia Parkes, her heart all aglow with love for Christ, and with remorse spurring her on to counteract, if possible, the evil she had already wrought, embraced the opportunity offered to aid them in their efforts. But she did not realize what she had undertaken, neither did she know that it was the safeguard to the happiness so recently found. She was dominated by the impulse, and with the new prospect came new courage and strength. Energy she had never lacked, and her

endurance seemed wonderful. She would sometimes say, when others were surprised that her slight frame did not give out:

"Oh, I am as wiry as a modern cable. I bend and twist under the strains of life; but I do not break. If it were not so I should have broken long ago."

And she was right. Now she was slight and pale, and wore a habitually sad or somewhat melancholy expression, which never entirely passed away. One day a woman to whom Celia was explaining the blessedness of a life with Christ, asked her dryly:

"Then why do you always look so sad?"

"It is my mark," Celia replied, without smiling. "The scarlet letter that has been branded into my heart, or like Cain's mark, in my forehead; but it shall be for this life only. Sometime I shall wear the new name in my forehead, and then my sadness will flee away forever."

Yet Celia Parkes was not really sad in heart; she was too thoroughly absorbed in her work for that, and her pensive face was a sweet messenger to many a sin-sick soul; for she could tell these poor women of all they had ever done, and picture their sorrow and despair so vividly that, when she spoke to them of the better life, with its release from bondage, they could believe her with implicit trust.

Thus the years went by; toilsome, eventful years, brightened by much joy of reaping; but saddened often also by bitter memories of things that could never be straightened. Oftentimes some obstacle would cross her path, and with sorrowful eyes, she

would recognize it as the very barrier she herself had set up so long ago. There it was, come to meet her with its hateful taunt at last, like a demon that had been intimidated but not entirely overcome.

"Oh, the meshes of circumstances that our life weaves about itself! Even now, sometimes all things seem at cross purposes. It is almost of no use to try to disentangle myself. I am in a hopeless maze!" This was Celia's cry. But Eunice Radcliffe was always near with her comfort and upward-looking eyes, and like Paul, she pointed ever toward the future, and spoke of present joy and privilege of service; and Celia Parkes would take heart again, and remember what a God was hers.

For a long time Celia watched the papers for news of the murderer of her husband, and was in constant fear of meeting him when out on some errand of mercy. But this passed away in time, and she concluded that he was dead.

"Perhaps he has killed himself—as I might have done," she thought, shuddering at the horrible thought. "Oh! If I had only known then what was my condition and my danger!"

She often wondered what she should do if she did meet him and they recognized each other. But she always shrank from the thought, and said:

"God will not permit that punishment."

"And yet if you could do him any good?" some inward voice replied.

"Oh! but I could not. He would kill me. He is wicked—past redemption!"

"Ah! But what were you?" came the answer.

And she would bow her head in shame and condemnation.

"So God help me!" she prayed. But this was when they had first come to the city. Now she went along cheerfully and bravely on her mission.

She was going to visit her prisoners as usual one Lord's Day afternoon. In fact she had gained quite a reputation among them as the "woman preacher, who talks straight to your heart, and makes you see visions for hours after she has gone."

"She has a face like a pitying Nemesis," declared one of the prisoners, who could speak seven languages, and knew his mythology by heart.

"She's been to the deeps herself," said another. "You can see that; but she can talk till you think you're the very devil himself."

On this day Celia Parkes was on her way to speak words of warning and hope to these poor erring ones once more. As she entered the gloomy walls, a keeper came to her and said:

"One of the men wants to see the 'woman preacher.' He is a new man and has been a hard case. So do as you think best about it; for the man is one of the worst we have. He is so sly and treacherous. If you go to him, I would not advise you to stand very near to his cell, as it is not likely he will care much for your praying, and he may have some trick."

The keeper appeared quite solicitous, but he was a kind-hearted man, and he had often been anxious before, when the visit turned out to be for the good of the prisoner. But now a sudden rush of feeling

came over Celia; but with a slight tremor she replied:

"I have no fear. Many a one who comes to scoff returns to pray. I will go to his cell at once."

This particular cell had an extra grating, and was situated at a dark end of the corridor. The occupant crouched close to the wall, but was facing the door of the cell. His elbows rested on his knees, and his hands completely covered his face.

Celia Parkes drew near to the iron grating and peered in; her sympathy was excited at once. Had not the "little dear Dora" touched her when she was in the same attitude of dejection?

"My poor man," she said; "I have come to bring words of hope and comfort to your sin-troubled heart. Are you in despair? Look up and find relief. Are you ready to die? That is the question! Nay, you are not ready to die. You must first get ready to live."

The man did not move, but still kept his face covered by his hands.

Celia opened her Bible.

"Listen to the word of Life! 'As it is written: There is none righteous; no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. . .

"'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'"

Celia read these and other passages in her expressive, dramatic way. Her voice trembled with sympathy, and her face shone with pitying love. Still

the man's face was covered, and he uttered not a word.

"Oh, wretched man," she continued, peering into the cell. "I was once as wretched as you are. I too did not know that the great all-searching eye, which pierced my cowering heart, was weeping; weeping because of my wretchedness. I too was reaping the wages of sin; I too was tasting the bitter dregs of death; determined in my madness to drain the cup to the last drop, and then slink away out of sight of that awful eye. But a little loving face looked up into mine, and taught me that the eye was that of God. Love! the blessed face of Christ is love, standing by your side, touching your arm. He stands tenderly, patiently, at the door of your heart, as I stand here at the door of your cell. He is weeping. Jesus is weeping; not because he gave his life for you on the cross to save you from death and woe; but, oh, think of it! because you pierce him now again and again; him who loves you as no man loveth. You pierce his wounded heart, and will not listen to his love."

Suddenly the man sprang to his feet, and came close to the iron grating.

"Well, 'Star of the Night-shades,' so you have turned preacher, have you?"

"Oh, my God!" Celia gasped, staggering back.

"You have improved," sneered the man. "Really, that was tragic! Not quite such an amusing strain as you used to give; but, for the occasion, it could not be improved."

Just then the keeper came up with a frightened look, and asked what was the matter. Celia Parkes

controlled herself with great effort, and whispered something to the man at which he seemed reassured, and turned away again, but with the evident intention of keeping a close watch.

She drew nearer the cell, clutching the grating for support, and whispered, hoarsely:

"The vengeance of God is certain. My punishment has come; but his mercy and strength are mine also. He has forgiven me all the past. But even he cannot let me undo it all. In the name of all that has ever passed between us, pray to this God before it is too late."

"Perhaps you would be pleased to pray for me?" suggested the man, tauntingly. "You might pray out loud like a love letter, you know, because you could whisper a postscript on the sly, 'send him to the devil this minute!' You see I knew you aforetime," he sneered; "and when I heard what a figure you were cutting around here, thinks I, 'I have her now.'" He seemed to gloat over the anguish he was causing.

Celia Parkes was praying: "O, my God, my Christ, save me from this man! And, if possible, save his soul."

Soon he whispered, maliciously: "You played traitor with me, perhaps you remember; or have you forgotten that little incident? What do you think of my doing the same with you?"

"God save me!" she prayed, without moving. She felt that she was entirely at his mercy, but she was unable to move.

"It took you to do it," he continued. "I had my match for once; but I haven't got my match

now, I can tell you. I took lessons, you see." This last was almost a hiss.

"My punishment is greater than I can bear," prayed Celia Parkes, as her fingers pressed her burning eyeballs.

"They have me here for a little while; but I will scale the walls yet." He gave a demoniacal chuckle. "Then we will see! I'll come a wooing in a different way, perhaps. It will probably be more pleasing to you than my former courting. You see, love is stronger than death; I don't wish to go hence till I take my bride along with me." It was certainly the voice of a fiend.

Drawing herself up with a gleam of triumph, and looking straight into the villain's eye, Celia Parkes exclaimed:

"No one, not even Satan himself, shall be able to pluck me out of Christ's hand. I am more than conqueror through him that hath loved me, and given himself for me. Rejoice not against me, mine enemy; when I fall I shall rise again. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him until he plead my cause for me. He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness." Then lifting up her clasped hands, she whispered:

"Oh, who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression!" And then the keeper rushed hurriedly down the passage. The "woman preacher" had fallen, and was lying unconscious before the cell.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A NEW HOME.

My true love hath my heart, and I have his,
By just exchange one for another given.
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss,
There never yet was better bargain driven:
My true love hath my heart, and I have his.
—*Sir P. Sydney.*

A FEW days after the incident which occurred in the prison, Miss Vina Parkes, teacher of Latin and algebra in her own city high school, was on her way to the public library to exchange the book she held in her hand for another by the same author. She was alighting from the street car, and about to pass on, when she almost collided with some one, and heard a voice saying:

"Vinie! Vinie! I was just coming to find you."

Vina looked up at the large, dark eyes that smiled down upon her, and exclaimed:

"James!"

A span of horses was almost upon them, and they barely got out of danger as the driver shouted back at them:

"Fools!"

But they walked on, entirely unconcerned as to the opinion of the hackman. Both were too happy to mind such a slight occurrence as a hair-breadth escape from being trampled to death.

"Where in the world did you come from?" demanded Vina, with her old gleeful smile. "You must have dropped from the car roof as I stepped off."

"I came to town this morning," James answered, with his customary deliberation; "but just now I was on my way to make an important decision in my life."

"Don't let me hinder you in the least," said Vina, stopping with a most innocent gesture. "I am only going to the library to return a book." She held it out, so that he could see the title, "Innocents Abroad." "The only important thing about my errand is that I can hardly wait until I get another book of Mark Twain's—he is oh, so funny!"

"Vinie, you are the only one who *can* hinder me," he returned, touching her elbow, as a sign that they should walk on; "for you are the one who must do the deciding."

"I?" she asked, with bewitching astonishment; "now, Mr. Blake, you know very well that I don't know anything about such things. Business is not at all in my line. I hardly know enough to settle satisfactorily about my salary."

"You ought to know by this time," he answered gravely, "that it is not about business that I am talking; the business is settled already, and I am ready to begin my practice. I have my degree, and everything, except——"

"You have no patients?" she interrupted, with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes.

"Yes, I have all the patience in the world."

It was the first time Vina had ever heard him

make a pun. She laughed brightly, as she returned: "The Job of the nineteenth century! What monument are you going to choose? You know doctors have a vital connection with monuments, as well as patients."

He smiled vaguely as he said: "Don't talk of cold monuments—I want a wife."

"Monuments! A wife!" she exclaimed, in mock dismay. "No one but honest James Blake would ever mention those two in the same breath. I hope you will not be so rash in the presence of the chosen one. Take this warning from an old friend, James, else you will never succeed."

Once this sort of gayety would have troubled James Blake; but now he appeared rather to enjoy its drollery.

"You are a little witch," he declared; "for you have certainly bewitched me."

"I bewitched you?" she asked, between the interruptions of meeting others, who seemed to think they also had a right to the sidewalk. "Then you will want to have me executed, I suppose," she said, sorrowfully; "you old Puritan! But, I dare say, you would find a skeleton in your closet—afterward!"

"Vinie, Vinie! This is enough! Don't go on in that strain, please; it pains me."

"Physicians ought to bear a little of the pain they cause, you know," she returned, persuasively.

"They have theirs getting ready for the ordeal of life. Oh, Vinie, you can never realize how I have longed for you; how I have had to wait, and wait, with sometimes little hope——"

"If I can *never* realize it," she interrupted, more soberly, "then why tell me?"

They were near the library now. James Blake gazed a moment at her serious face, and a flush of pleasure stole over his countenance.

"Vinie, you know you love me, whatever you say. Will you not reward me by giving me one promise?"

She stopped a moment, and pretended to write upon her book cover, saying at the same time, as if reading aloud:

"June eighteenth: zero days from date, I promise to pay to James G. Blake, M. D., or order, my heart's fortune and nonsense with interest, value received.

"VINA PARKES."

Then looking up with a mischievous laugh, she left him and hurried into the library.

"If she isn't the brightest, merriest, truest little darling! Mother surely cannot help loving her."

She came out soon again, hugging her book.

"Are you satisfied now, you ogre?" she inquired.

But she need not have asked. For once in his life, James Blake looked magnificent. He made her take his arm, even though it was not yet dusk.

"They will all know that we are engaged," said Vina, reprovingly.

James confessed that he was willing to advertise the fact.

"But some of them know me," she urged; "there comes one of my pupils now."

James allowed the hand to be withdrawn. Though

he cared nothing for such things himself, he was very considerate of the feelings of others.

Now that Vina had really pledged herself, and James Blake had received her promise, there was no reason why she should not have all the "fun" she liked. She knew that James really enjoyed her bright sayings, although he could not always keep up with her, and it was so delightful to watch the expressions that came and went on his face at her pleasure. Of course James knew that she loved him; but in spite of this, or rather perhaps, because of this, she enjoyed teasing him a little.

But now James was talking about their prospects in life, and he was intensely in earnest. He wanted to be married very soon, and he proposed that their home should be in Milston.

"It is a growing place, you know," he said, in defense of his proposition; "and near the city. There will be a good large practice—rather scattered to be sure, but I would not mind that; and besides, father and mother would like to have us." He watched her face anxiously.

She grew sober at this. "Your mother wants us to live with them?" she asked, skeptically.

"Yes, dear," he answered, as if trying to shield her from something.

"Now, James," she went on, "I know she never really liked me; I could see that at Milston. You are sure that she knows I am the one you are to bring home?"

"Perfectly sure!" he answered. "She always knew it never could be any one else, and if she did object once, she is entirely reconciled now,

since——" he was going on, but stopped with a quick blush.

"Since?" repeated Vina, interrogatively.

"Oh, Vina! I did not mean to say what I started to: it was not necessary; but now I shall have to; since your sister has come back and is so different, she has no more fears for you." Certainly James had little tact, but his honest love overpowered all Vina's recoiling pride. "Oh, Vina dear! you know I did not mean to hurt you," he added, with quick anxiety.

"No, James," she said, after a moment; "and there was some reason." It cost Vina a great effort to confess it, but James' frankness constrained her.

"At one time, I might have done something that would disgrace you, and I shudder now to think how it might have ended. But God and Miss Eunice saved me." Her lips quivered, and as James took her arm in his, she looked up at him and said, "Oh, James! I *did* suffer."

Vina felt the comfort of his strong sympathy. After a time she smiled: "But that is past now."

Then he asked about Celia, and Mr. and Mrs. Radcliffe, and spoke with fervent reverence of the latter. Soon, however, they recurred to the subject so near to both—their marriage—and James said:

"Yes; father and mother are both anxious to have us live with them. Mother would do most of the work, as always, you know; and the house is large enough. They want us for company, and I don't want to refuse mother. But if you would prefer——"

"No, James," she broke in; "I want to go just

where you say. I like Milston, for there is where I first saw you and Miss Eunice, and we could come to the city often." A new thought seemed to occur to her.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Oh, mother!" she said. "Mrs. Olway, for she is a mother to me, and I do love her so!"

"You hate to leave her?" he questioned, with a bit of a jealous pang.

"For any one but you," she replied, in a way that more than satisfied him.

So it was settled. Vina was to have a few weeks to arrange her wardrobe, to complete the school year and resign her position. Then she warned all her friends that they would better not engage themselves without privilege of furlough, for she had set a day on which she wished to be the observed of all observers.

When this happy news reached New York, it came as a beam of sunlight. Vina's letter said:

"Now you must come to the wedding. In fact, I shall not be married, if you are not present, and you know what that would mean too well to refuse. Eunice, do persuade Celia that she can come a little early to see that her sister is doing everything properly. I never felt the need of a multitude of counsellors as now. Do all consider how momentous the occasion is, and come. Come early!"

Celia Parkes had not yet recovered from the shock of her prison visit. She had fallen in a dead faint, and was brought home unconscious. Eunice divined the truth almost at once, for Celia had often confessed her fears; and she felt greatly alarmed.

"The best thing is to send her out of the city at once," Ernest Radcliffe advised,

"Yes; up to mother," Eunice replied, rejoiced at the happy coincidence.

So it came about that Vina was more than delighted to learn that her sister would come immediately, and remain until after the wedding.

It proved to be beneficial to Mrs. Olway that she had Celia to cheer and nurse just at this time, for she found it a trial to lose Vina. The girl had become very dear to her since Eunice was married, and this queen of mothers had begun to look upon Vina as a daughter. Though she had not been entirely blind as to what might some time happen —for Vina had confided in her to the extent of saying that James Blake was the "nicest" young man she had ever met; yet she always looked upon it as in the distant future—so blind are the best of us to what we do not wish to occur.

Vina herself was deeply touched after she had imparted the news of her engagement; but chiefly on her own account.

"You have been such a mother to me; but now I love James best," she said.

Mrs. Olway gave her blessing, and appeared interested in the slightest detail of the bridal preparation; while another trial etched its indelible mark upon her face.

But Celia needed a great deal of attention. Vina was greatly shocked at the fact of Celia's meeting with her husband's murderer; and was even wrought up to quite a pitch of excitement the first night after hearing about it. She imagined all sorts of

things that might happen to Celia, at the hands of this man. But her fears soon wore off under the spell of her own busy happiness, and she tried to interest Celia in other things, and make her forget the "horrible affair."

"Oh, Celia, sister, do put off that sad look! Of course I know you have had trouble, but surely it will not spoil all your life," said Vina to her one day, as the two sat over some sewing. Mrs. Olway was not there.

"But, Vina," Celia answered, trying to smile, "it follows me like a shadow. I do not mean that its gloom shall overshadow others; I would not mar your happiness for the world, you know, and I am not hopeless yet. I shall be myself again soon, I trust; but I shall always be more or less haunted. Oh, Vina! my life is an awful warning; perhaps God wants to make me a warning; that may be the most I can do now."

Vina laid aside her work, and came and sat on the stool by her sister, for she had learned to express ready sympathy.

"Oh, Celia," she said, "think of all those you have cheered! Think of all you have helped to save! You have done a wonderful work there in New York, as every one says. I have sometimes thought you have done more than you ever could have done, if you had not gone astray yourself."

"Never say that, Vina," declared Celia, solemnly; "never say that! Think of the evil I did which I can never undo—never! That evil grows just as the good grows. What little I do now is only like gleaning a few handfuls at the last."

"But oh, Celia, there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repenteth."

"Yes, dear," and Celia smiled through her tears; "that is a glorious truth; but think what might have been avoided, and what might have been done in those early years if I had only known; and what mother suffered." She burst into tears again—the tears of remorse. After a while she added: "I had no strength then, and no one——" but just here with a sudden impulse, she clasped Vina and said fervently: "I am so glad that Eunice brought you here. Oh, if others only realized their responsibility as these do, misery and sin and wretchedness would flee away."

Mrs. Olway found them sitting thus, and softly laid a hand on each head, saying:

"My children, let not your hearts be troubled."

And then Mollie came to call them to supper.

As matters now stood, James Blake felt a strange affinity for city life, and came in quite often; more frequently in fact than Mrs. Blake deemed necessary.

This woman who was so fond of her son, had made herself consent, and heartily too, to his marriage; and she felt that she should succeed just as well in making herself love her new daughter; but she was still willing to put off the fatal day, and secretly claimed for herself her son's entire attention until the time should arrive. But when she saw him pining for Vina, she let him go smilingly without a word of reproach, and lavished her overflow of affection upon John, who was as fearful as ever of hidden consequences.

"See here, John," she said one night after James had gone to the city, "you will have to fill your own place and James' too. Can you do it? Do you feel equal to it?" She tried to be gay, and always laughed herself out of despondency.

"Oh, James is going to forget all about us, thinking of her," John sighed: "We might better have let them go off by themselves, and perhaps he would have done better starting in the city anyway. It has all gone wrong, and I knew it would as soon as James went away to school, and——"

"There, there, John! Now that is enough. You know you will have to take back every word as soon as I tell you that James could never have been a farmer; and that he is just cut out for a doctor; and that he has paid off all his debts; and he has a splendid prospect; and, after all, his falling in love is natural, perfectly natural, though we are getting so old we don't see it as we used to—but we fell in love once, you remember. Now, isn't it so?"

She finished this energetic harangue with a good-natured laugh, and John was forced to say:

"I suppose you are right, Harriet! You always can see it straight, though I often get it all crooked again, thinking it over."

"Yes, yes! you old chronic thinker. You just must talk more and stop this horrid thinking."

She was rubbing his head now, and smoothing down, or rather making a noble effort to smooth down his hair the right way. It always stood the other way; but then it was so heavy and thick that it could hardly do otherwise than stand up.

Harriet Blake always smoothed out her own cares and annoyances by "doctoring up" John; and soon her jealousy of Vina was swallowed up in the attempt to make the house comfortable; and later in reading aloud, while her companion dozed in his large easy-chair. Nevertheless, she went right on reading, as she enjoyed the exercise, and it made the subject clearer.

"One's own voice is a comfort. It is like another person almost. Perhaps that is why a good many like to hear themselves talk so well; they imagine it is some one else," she thought, after John had launched far out on the sea of dreams, and was apparently beginning to double the Cape of Snoredom.

This juncture in the voyage was always a signal for revery.

"John must be thinking hard, and I fear he has got his thoughts into a hopeless mess by the sound. They all seem to be weeping and gnashing their teeth. I wonder if I hadn't better interfere, and set them straight again."

Harriet Blake received an immense amount of pleasure from her husband's foibles, all by herself. She would not admit their existence to a neighbor, nor did she ever expose their true character to their owner. As she now glanced at him furtively, she thought:

"What would I do if anything should happen to John?"

The idea was unbearable, and she chased it away by sending a long Macaulay sentence bounding and rebounding at its heels. She quite revelled in the

historian's style and gave her voice full play. The echo may possibly have reached the boundaries of the aforementioned cape, as certain discords began to grow less distinct.

By this time, James' step was heard in the hall, and the mother instinct was alert. She was not disappointed. James came in, walking softly, as he knew the father's failing, and sat down by his mother. His face was radiant with happiness and all the mother jealousy was forgotten. He was her son—then and forevermore.

James Blake was an object of jealousy elsewhere than at home. His appearance at the Olway residence of late had not been welcomed by all the family. Dora was really quite determined to break it up altogether when she heard that he was to marry Vina. The engagement was fully as distasteful to Hollister; and the two planned to prevent the culmination of the catastrophe if possible. Dora was almost twelve, but it was vain to tell her that Aunt Eunice got married, and of course Vina would do the same. She approved of neither wedding. It was all a vexation and a deceit. She had expected always to have Vina to tell her stories. Indeed, Vina had become quite a fixture in the nursery, and at last Hollister threatened to explain the matter to the "hateful man," and have the thing stopped. Vina was greatly amused by their lamentations, and she herself felt that it would be hard to leave the children.

"It would be under other circumstances," she whispered to herself.

Vina's marriage made quite a change in the en-

tire family. Her bright ways and general adaptability to circumstances had endeared her to Garton's share of the household as well as to his mother. Nothing but the extended visit from Eunice after the wedding would have satisfied them, and Ernest Radcliffe persuaded his wife that it was her double duty to stay while he returned with Celia. As Eunice really needed the rest, she remained several weeks; and meanwhile she induced her mother to accompany her back to New York to spend the fall and winter months.

Thus it came about that Garton and Lena were alone with the children for the first time in their married life; and while they grew to be more than ever to each other, they yet often found themselves lonesome, and heartily, although inaudibly, sympathized with the plaint of the children, which expressed in the words of Dora, was:

"Vina is just a naughty fraud; and grandma doesn't love us very much after all, because she stays away so long."

Returning home from business one night in December, Garton Olway seized upon a happy thought —at least it made his face flush with pleasure. The result was that he said to Lena:

"See here, wife, what would you say to taking a trip of a month or so through the South, with perhaps a look at Richard and Eunice on our way back, eh? It would give the children pleasure, and I can do it now. Never could arrange to leave my work better! Besides, dearie, you need a change. This moping atmosphere is not to be dispelled even by society; now is it? What say you, little woman,

to the journey? Speak you the word, and it shall be done!" He ended with a bombastic voice and manner, comical in the extreme.

"Why, Garton, it is lovely. You know nothing would please me better; and the children—they will be just wild with delight."

"To be sure, it will take them out of school," added Garton, as if he had considered every detail; "but the sight-seeing will more than make up for geography and history, and Dora is none too strong."

"Then they are so bright anyway," said Lena, with satisfaction; "they are way ahead of the others now."

"Tut, tut, little woman!" Garton replied, tweaking her ear with assumed disapproval; "how conceited it makes one to be a mother!"

"I suppose nothing of the kind applies to fathers?" Lena retorted, smiling.

"Let me see," Garton reflected; "isn't it every crowess that thinks her own the whitest?"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FLIGHT SOUTH.

Faith alone can interpret life, and the heart that aches and
bleeds with the stigma
Of pain, alone bears the likeness of Christ, and can com-
prehend its dark enigma.

—*Longfellow.*

"HAS Mr. Olway written you explicitly at what time we may expect them?" The questioner looked up dreamily from her treatise on art, as Richard Winthrop entered the library.

"No, Fredonia; but I shall certainly hear to-night. They have stayed longer than they first intended. Now they are with friends at Richmond, and this will be their next stop. They are having a delightful tour, Garton says. The children are fairly speechless with admiring wonder; it was just the thing for them."

"I am exceedingly anxious to see Dora," said Fredonia, smiling; "since she bids fair to be my dangerous rival—our rival, I suppose I should say, though I am unwilling to admit any one else in that category." There was a mischievous look in her eyes, as she spoke. "But you don't show me any other of your love letters?"

"I have no others, sister, sad as it may seem; and I am quite content with Dora's."

Mrs. Morange sometimes gave vent to her curi-

osity in this way. She felt that it was next to impossible to suppose that Richard would not sooner or later fall in love, and as she viewed the women whom she knew in Washington, she selected one, or possibly two, either of whom might be the happy possessor to such good fortune. But Richard's attentions still seemed to be scrupulously impartial. Fredonia had not the faith to believe that her personal wishes would be gratified, and she could not understand his apparent indifference.

"We hear no more of the French heiress now," Fredonia remarked, after a short silence. "At one time I almost trembled lest she should usurp the place of a rival."

Richard Winthrop's face altered, and Fredonia was uncertain whether or not to proceed. She decided to change the subject.

"Oh! by the way, Richard, does Lena keep up her music? She performed very creditably before her marriage, and her voice was quite pretty and sweet."

"No," returned her brother. "I think she has basely neglected her practice; but she makes up for it by her strictness with Dora. My little sweetheart shows remarkable skill for a child, and considerable talent. She inherits from both sides—Garton, you know, is latently musical."

"I do remember that his sister was especially so. Her voice, I believe, was something wonderful, although I heard her only once, and that when she was quite young. I thought then she would be heard from some time; but probably it did not develop as well as it promised."

"Yes, it did!" declared Richard, with fervor. "She has the most expressively beautiful voice I ever heard. It fairly entrances one, or rather it exalts and inspires."

He had seldom spoken of Eunice Radcliffe to Fredonia, and then only when called out unconsciously, as it were; but his sister had never before noted his manner so keenly as now. An idea flashed across her mind.

"Why, yes; of course, you knew her after she grew up. I remember you used to mention her occasionally in your letters. You doubtless saw much of her at her brother's."

"You mistake there," replied Richard, on his guard; "she was seldom at home, but devoted herself almost exclusively to mission work among the poor and degraded. She literally poured out her life at their feet; but the perfume spread everywhere." He had evidently forgotten himself again.

"Indeed!" said Fredonia, more interested than ever; "she must have been a perfect angel!"

Richard gave her a quick glance and replied:

"Hardly an angel—an angel would not have deigned to be so human. You know what her mother is," he added, in explanation; "Mrs. Radcliffe is Mrs. Olway, intensified."

"Richard!" exclaimed Fredonia; "could you think her all that and not love her?"

Coloring slightly, but with perfect composure, he answered:

"She is not the sort of woman to speak of falling in love with." And to Richard's immense relief, a maid entered to announce the arrival of guests.

They proved to be Garton and his family. They had decided to shorten their visit, but the telegram announcing the change had not yet reached its destination. The guests, however, were more than welcome to their friends. Mr. Morange was a cordial host, and was desirous that the new-comers should enjoy to the utmost their sojourn in the nation's capital.

"You have been traveling through the South?" said Mr. Morange, inquiringly, looking indolently at Mr. Olway. "What do you think of your native land?"

"I like much better my native State, and the cot where I was born," Garton replied, with his peculiar smile. "Oh, Florida is gorgeous; especially the snakes and crocodiles, isn't it, Dora?" he asked, turning to her, as she sat on a sofa with Uncle Richard, and listening intently to the conversation.

Dora shuddered, and hid her face under Uncle Richard's coat lapel.

"The other Southern States are full of interest, and thrill the patriotic heart," Garton continued, looking at his host. "Old Virginia is a glory—but Washington, oh, Washington is the queen of cities."

"We hope to show you all her graces," interposed Fredonia, who sat somewhat apart with Lena, carrying on a low-voiced conversation. "We mean to take you into her very presence, where she sits in majesty upon her throne."

"There isn't any queen here, is there, papa?" asked Hollister, who was perched on his father's chair-arm, and leaning sleepily against the paternal shoulder.

The long journey had somewhat subdued the children, and they were quite ready to retire soon after dinner.

"A queen doesn't rule us, say, papa?" insisted the irrepressible boy.

"No, Hollister, no; we were simply likening this beautiful city to a queen."

"Why not a king, papa?"

Just then Mrs. Olway suggested another treat for the children, a journey to the land of Nod. With a half-sleepy smile, and a bravely repressed yawn, Dora and Hollister accepted the invitation and went to their rooms, accompanied by their mother. It needed but a few moments after the preliminary preparations were duly completed, ere both were at their journey's end.

As she was descending the broad stairs, having left the children sweetly sleeping, Mrs. Olway was met by her hostess, who suggested a quiet chat in her boudoir. They turned their steps to this, and when comfortably seated, Mrs. Morange remarked:

"The gentlemen can entertain themselves. What beautiful children you have," she continued. "Dora is a perfect picture of yourself, almost; yet, no, not in color of eyes; what I mean is that she is just as bewitchingly pretty as you were at her age. I believe you were the only one who ever was pretty at that awkward age, Lena!"

"Now, Fredonia, don't flatter me. You probably know how I love Dora. Richard has told you of my weakness."

"Oh, no! But Richard—really, I told him jokingly to-day that I was getting jealous of Dora.

He shows me her letters you know, sometimes, and they are really remarkable for a child."

"Yes; Dora adores her Uncle Richard, and you cannot blame her. Besides Richard deserves devotion."

"He has it too, Lena, right here in Washington. But he does not seem to relish it much."

"Truly?" asked Lena, with aroused interest.

"Yes; and it seems strange to me too—he has such a chivalrous nature. You know how he worshiped mother. Yet it appears that he cares for no woman to the exclusion of others."

"Oh, Fredonia!" Lena said, with a sigh; and something else trembled on her lips. Ought she to breathe it?

"Lena, I have wondered of late; could you tell me, whether Richard ever cared for any one or not? Would you know?"

"I think he did care for some one once. I thought so; but am not certain now. If he did, he is a perfect hero!"

"Eunice?" whispered Fredonia.

"Yes."

Then both were silent; Lena wondering if it was true, and feeling confirmed by what Fredonia had said; and Fredonia almost assured that her suspicions were correct.

"Pardon one more question," said Fredonia, in a low voice. "Did she refuse him?"

"Oh, Fredonia, no; she did not know that he cared for her. It would have about ruined her happiness, had she known."

"Soon Fredonia said, sadly: "Strange! Poor

Richard!" After a moment her face brightened. "Now he can always live with us. Oh, Lena! You don't know what a relief it is, with all its pain. Perhaps I am selfish; but life is so different with him here."

Lena did not know what to say. She almost criticised Fredonia, and yet she could not blame her; but she did not know how much personal dissatisfaction lay behind, and made spontaneous that outburst. Fredonia seemed to have all that heart could wish; and the thought of questioning her friend's domestic happiness did not enter Lena's mind. After a time she whispered:

"I can appreciate your feeling, but I believe now, with Garton, that it has sobered his life. Not that he is less cheery and bright; but, as Garton puts it, 'he has shuffled off the coil of indolent culture, and is all alive.' Garton was always talking about Richard's 'atmosphere of Greek leisure.' You know what a man Garton is for phrases—the editor, I suppose."

"That is just it!" declared Fredonia, with sudden conviction. "It just expresses the difference."

They had talked for some time, when Fredonia remembered the others, and they descended to the drawing room.

Mr. and Mrs. Morange were as good as their word. Indeed, they not only made all the glories of Washington pay homage to their friends, but they also proposed a reception in their honor, in spite of mild remonstrance on the part of the entertained.

But the plan was not destined to be carried out,

for an important letter came to prevent it. And in a few days their guests had returned to their home.

"It seems lonesome now that they are all gone, doesn't it, Richard?" said Fredonia, the first evening after their departure, as they sat in their pleasant library. "But I do not mind it with you here," she added, quickly. "I hope you do not."

"Why, sister mine, of course I do not," he said, looking up, "when I am with my Fredonia. It was you who said it was lonesome; I simply assented."

"You are the best brother that ever lived!" she declared, with more emotion than he remembered ever to have noted before in her pale, beautiful face.

"What is it, dear?" he asked, immediately rising. "Have you any secret trouble?"

"Have I been so selfish and pre-occupied as not to know that Fredonia was unhappy?" he thought, with a twinge of conscience.

"No, Richard; only I feared that you might be disappointed at not going with Garton, and seeing your old friends again." This was just what she had not meant to say. How did it happen that she, usually so tactful, should plunge into the heart of the matter thus?

Richard's face paled slightly, but he smiled with perfect calmness, and said:

"Oh, no. I am accustomed to have things upset—plans that I have made. I have learned the blessed lesson that God plans more wisely for me." He looked very grave just now, but he took both of her delicate hands in his, almost as slender and

shapely as her own, saying: "That was really all? You were thinking of me, as usual?"

"I was thinking only of you, and wishing I could be of some use," she answered, somewhat reassured; "but not as usual."

"Fredonia!" he said, as if he had just made up his mind to something. "I am in a little perplexity just now; and I want to confide in you, and ask your advice. I may not take it, you know, dear; and that is what made me hesitate; but you will not mind if I am a little headstrong?"

The last phrase made her somewhat apprehensive, but she was delighted that he was going to unburden himself.

"Last week," he said, "I received a letter from Mademoiselle Lasée."

Fredonia started. Her fears arose and danced before her in a group of mocking faces.

"You are surprised! You are not more surprised than was I. Of course this is a secret—none else must ever know," he added, gravely. "She makes a strange request that I will meet her at a certain place, no matter where. She even implores me to come, saying that she is very anxious, indeed must see me, somehow. Her letter is effusive with a sort of gratitude; but it is the French style. We must not judge her by American standards. What I want most to say is this: I now condemn myself for being with her so much as I was——"

"But it was not your fault, Richard," Fredonia interposed. "You could not help it. Circumstances threw you together."

"Never mind, sister. I suppose that is true, and

yet I sometimes fear that she was learning to care for me. I tried to prevent this happening; but it now seems as if it must have been a mistake because misunderstood."

"Well, Richard," Fredonia said, as if to forestall any further criticism of himself, "I was a little uneasy when I saw you together sometimes, because I was not sure that you read her true character."

"Still," Richard continued, speaking absently, "I feel called to the task, and whatever it involves, I must not shrink now. I see it now, dear. It is all clear to me I must go.'

"You must go?" she exclaimed, not understanding his meaning. "You must go to meet her? You do not mean it? Oh, Richard, be reasonable!"

"I warned you I probably should not take your advice, you know," he reminded her. "I was trying to find out my duty. Have no fear, sister; I see now that I should not have told you, and I did not intend to, until you seemed to crave the confidence. Forget about it, dear, if it troubles you!"

He was immovable now that his duty was clear, and Fredonia know that remonstrance was useless. This was a strange man, Fredonia thought: as tender as a woman, yet unyielding as iron in a matter of honor; so quick to discern the false in Mademoiselle Lasée, yet ready to expose himself to risk for the sake of granting her unusual request; most appreciative of nobility in thought or character, yet tolerant of the most degraded or frivolous.

"But he was not always so," she meditated. "There is some great mystery about him, what-

ever it is. He seems to live entirely above society, but never consciously ignores its most trivial requirements—unless it is something he considers wrong. Yet there is very little of the soaring idealist in Richard; he never poses as the impenetrable statesman or the pious reformer. As Mrs. Blount said, 'He is a typical Christian.' I believe I have never been reminded so much of what Christ must have been—especially since she spoke of it. Oh, I fear I have not thought much about Christ myself, except as an unattainable model; but Richard speaks as if the very person of Christ was before his eyes, now—always in his presence."

Fredonia had looked at the Christ as a beautiful picture, viewing him, as it were, with æsthetic adoration, as a treasure of art, more precious than all else in the world, but still simply as an external influence.

"Richard is showing me," she said to herself, "and sometime I shall let him tell me more about it. He will not speak, I know, until I show him that I wish it."

During this monologue Fredonia had forgotten some little things, which at the time of their occurrence she had considered faults in Richard, but now she said:

"And yet he is not flawless. Think of acceding to such a request! It is a regular fool's errand. And then some accident may happen to him. Oh, dear! I wish he would not go. It really is not necessary. I shall try to dissuade him—if I can."

But she could not persuade him to remain. As

he left the house the next day, he told her not to expect him home that night.

"Fredonia dear, do not worry. Show more confidence in your brother than that. I know what I am doing, and I have no fear. Surely you can trust a brother of yours to do right."

He had made her smile at last, but she said: "If you only did not always forget yourself when you are with another."

"Thank you, Fredonia; that is the dearest compliment I ever had!" He kissed her cheek, and was gone.

CHAPTER XX.

A KNIGHT MUST KEEP HIS VOW.

Be thou the king and we will work thy will who love thee.
—*Tennyson.*

IT was not an easy task that Richard had set before him. But as he now viewed the matter, the letter might be the clue to a problem on which his thoughts had often been at work ever since he had heard the parting words of Mademoiselle Lasée.

His mind had been divided against itself, for his leisure moments had been taken up with an inward colloquy. One voice had persisted in saying :

"It is a very fine theory, but practically it is a failure, worse than a failure, for it has led to something worse."

But then the other voice would answer :

"Can evil come out of good? I did as the good prompted me."

"Ah! did you mistake the prompting?" the former voice would retort. "The motive was right, but were you not carried away from your original intention?"

Then the rejoinder would follow

"Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer."

As he went to the place of appointment, Richard felt that whatever he was to meet was only what he

had unwittingly, but none the less certainly brought upon himself.

It cost him quite an effort to go. Aside from the inward hesitation, business was pressing just then. His mind was interested in a deep State problem, and he had been obliged to sit up nearly all night in consequence of his proposed brief absence.

"After all, is it worth while?" he asked himself, as he settled in his chair in the car that afternoon, and pretended to read a newspaper. He could not, however, and was soon busy thinking what might be before him, when a hand tapped him on the shoulder, and he looked up to see one of his fellow-senators, who was smiling upon him and saying:

"Well, well, Winthrop, this is an unexpected pleasure. I thought you were at work on more important topics than newspaper headings; or is this a committee exploration?"

As he spoke, he dropped contentedly into the chair at his friend's side. He noticed that friend's apparent embarrassment—something unusual in the latter, as he was noted for his unruffled composure—as he answered that he was going to meet an appointment, adding:

"I was just looking for our column, as you touched my shoulder. I had a pardonable curiosity to know in what places the editor had expressed the thought more clearly than the original. They twisted my only simile horribly the last time; did you notice? It was all the more painful, because I had tried so hard to leave the figure out, but it had to go in at last, as it held the key to the argu-

ment in a nutshell. Oh! I see they have corrected the mistake to-day."

Then they discussed some of the questions at issue in friendly undertones, relapsing into occasional intervals of silence, as they scanned their respective dailies.

They had been traveling for a while when the other said:

"Going to Baltimore, I suppose? I shall be glad of a companion."

"No!" was Winthrop's reply; "a smaller place near there."

The other looked somewhat surprised and disappointed, but made no further inquiries. His thought, however, was:

"What under the sun has Winthrop got hold of up here that concerns—well, I declare! My wife has not all the curiosity of the family. But Winthrop seems excited, and evidently does not intend to be communicative. Of course, it may be private; but Winthrop never seemed to have any private affairs."

After his friend left him at Baltimore, Richard Winthrop acknowledged to himself that he had never felt more nervous. He despised himself because he could not control his inward agitation.

"Is it guilt or is it fear?" he asked himself. "If my conscience were accusing me, I could not feel worse. Begone, quavering self! I will none of you. Christ is my guide and helper."

It was quite dark before the train stopped at the designated station. He left it with a steadied nerve, and looked around. In a moment a softly gloved

hand grasped his arm, and a voice said, exultantly:

"Oh, monsieur! I am so happy. It is so good of you." Mademoiselle Lasée was in traveling costume and closely veiled; but he could see or rather feel the sparkle of her eyes through the thick gauze. A gentleman stood by her side. Richard Winthrop had not noticed him at first, because of the excitement and the crowd. Mademoiselle Lasée introduced him as "Monsieur Bradley," adding something to him in an undertone. Then she took Richard Winthrop's proffered arm, and looking up at him, said:

"You will come with us to the hotel?"

Richard Winthrop bowed gravely, but said nothing. The place proved to be but small, notwithstanding the crowd at the station. When they reached a comparatively deserted sidewalk, Mademoiselle Lasée said in a low voice:

"Monsieur Winthrop, I even prayed to your God that you would come; and you see he has answered me——but I did not believe he would."

Richard Winthrop had not expected this sort of a greeting, and returned gently:

"I am totally in the dark as to the reason for my coming; but if I can be of service, I shall be very glad."

She laughed.

"It is just like you to say that. You did not like coming on uncertainties; I knew you would not, and that was why I feared you might not come."

The other gentleman still kept silent, though he

walked with them, on the other side of Mademoiselle Lasée. He was about Richard Winthrop's height, wore a heavy mustache, and had an English face. Even in his gait he showed some of the sturdy English traits; but one could see that he was deeply interested in Mademoiselle Lasée.

Richard Winthrop observed this with pleasure, for he liked the man's face. Mademoiselle Lasée evidently had the Englishman at her command, but it was difficult to decide whether or not she quite enjoyed his devotion. He, however, did not appear to be jealous; perhaps he was too much blinded by love's assurance.

Presently they reached a comfortable, but unpretentious hotel, and the Englishman led the way to the public parlor. There were several other occupants of the room, but one end was free. Mademoiselle Lasée motioned Richard Winthrop to a sofa, while she took her English friend aside and whispered to him a moment, after which he bowed and withdrew. Thereupon she seated herself beside Mr. Winthrop on the sofa, and lifted her veil. Her face was flushed and her eyes unusually bright. She began in hurried accents, speaking entirely in French:

"You look amazed, monsieur! But I can manage the other gentleman perfectly, you see, and it is right that it should be so, is it not, for we are engaged."

Richard Winthrop nodded assent, brightening perceptibly.

"Ah! you are glad, I see, monsieur. I cannot help being sorry that you are glad; but I knew how

it would be." Then she changed expression. "You have feared me ever since those last words of mine!" she added, without blushing; "I regretted them afterward.

"But I am obliged to marry," she spoke, with a sort of impatience. "I have so many engagements! You are shocked, but it is so. The only way to be free is to marry—for a woman, I mean. Now, monsier, I am in trouble." She said this with the air of a spoiled child, who has been crossed. "And you can help me. I can tell you, for you know me very well. This man," with a slight gesture toward the door, "loves me most of all; he would give his life for me. He left his business in England to come here seeking me. I have been engaged to him since very young, but I have deceived him and slighted him all these years."

She went on more hurriedly. "For one thing, he is not wealthy, and my uncle wanted a wealthy husband for me; but I did not care to marry then anyway. I thought I never should care for any one till I saw you." She did not hesitate, but spoke frankly. "I almost worshiped you; and since then I have tried to worship your God, when trouble came. While we were stopping at Niagara Falls I met him," making a motion toward the door again; "and when he told me how he had sought for me, and wanted to protect me he seemed like you; and I loved him." Her face lighted up a little. "Yes! I love him, because in some way he makes me think of you. I do not know how or why—but he does." Suddenly she drew nearer and whispered:

"We are more than engaged—we are married!"

Richard Winthrop ejaculated: "Good!"

"Ah, you are glad!" she said, rather sadly. "We want your blessing, for—my uncle has disinherited me." Her lips trembled.

"He has?" Sympathy was in every line of Richard Winthrop's features.

"Yes; I did not believe he would, and I was married secretly, thinking that when it was done, he would not object."

"Have you no fortune?"

"A small one," she answered; "but I expected to be rich."

"Does your husband care?" Richard Winthrop inquired, thinking to get at the worst at once.

"No," she said, with a quiet smile; "he only wanted me. But *I* care so much Is it wrong to care?"

Could this child-like questioner be the same Mademoiselle Lasée whom he had met in Washington? Richard Winthrop suppressed an irrelevant smile, as he replied:

"To love money for its own sake is ignoble and wrong, but to prize it as a means of doing good, is wise."

She was thoughtful a moment, and then burst into a coquettish laugh. "There! I knew you would say that; but I want it to get beautiful possessions. I could not live without beautiful things."

"The most beautiful things are not the outward ones, you know," he added, gently. "The King's daughter is all beautiful within. This is the priceless pearl of beauty; but outward beauty is not to be utterly despised. It too, like money, is to be prized

for the good it may accomplish; for the inward beauty it may inspire." He had grown earnest and fatherly in his manner.

Soon she said, rapidly:

"Could you—would you try to change my uncle's mind? I could endure it all except being poor. I must have plenty of money."

"My child," the manner of address came spontaneously, "I will try; but how I wish that you would use it nobly, to help others, instead of turning it to merely personal uses,"

"I will promise to use most of it for benevolences as you wish it—I could do it to please you." After a moment's reflection she added: "It would please him too."

"Do not do it simply to please us," Richard Winthrop pleaded eagerly. "Do it to please Him whom we worship—the lover of us all, who left even heaven to seek us, because he loved us so."

His face was a benediction as he spoke, and Mademoiselle Lasée noticed the allusion. She seemed greatly impressed. After a while she said:

"My uncle does not know where I am; but he is going to Washington before he returns to Paris. You could see him there? He would listen to you. Oh, I am so glad you came," she continued, brightly; "I could not leave America without seeing you once more. Even if you do not placate my uncle, I can bear it better now. You will not forget me?" Something in the face of her hearer made her add: "Oh! he is not jealous! I have told him all about you, and he feels very much indebted to

you for what you have done and are going to do for me."

Mademoiselle Lasée, or rather Madame Bradley, was about to say something more, when the door opened, and the Englishman walked in. He gave a quick anxious glance from one to the other, then came up and stood near his wife. She looked up at him with a smile, and the last bit of jealousy died out of his eyes.

"May I stay now?" he asked in French.

"*Oui, oui, monsieur.*"

Richard Winthrop arose, and offered his hand cordially.

"You have my best wishes."

The Englishman's face brightened as he replied:

"That means a great deal to me. Accept my thanks and highest esteem."

There was an invisible tie of sympathy between these men, and at that instant both perceived it. It seemed to both that, in some mysterious way, Richard Winthrop had helped the other man when they were strangers, and even though an ocean had surged between them.

There was a promise of latent friendship in the Englishman's grasp, which seemed to be waiting for an opportunity to express itself in some future deed. But the simple perception of this kind of gratitude often brings help, which could never be vouchsafed in any other way.

Richard Winthrop went back to Washington, rejoicing that he had come. His so-called theory had proved correct.

"It is possible and profitable not only to give to

others in special ways which men call benevolence; but is even more profitable to give daily, in the constant social intercourse such as one has, and the best one has, whether it be words, or deeds, or sympathy—and this after all, has the most potent influence. What we call little, is only so in name. And this is true giving."

He felt that a new bond united him to all he held most dear; and he was now ready to go forth to a more severe test—to a sacrifice, if need be; indeed, he felt that he could glory in the sacrifice, for the sake of Him who once for all had glorified the cross.

CHAPTER XXI.

A BABY'S PART.

With what a look of proud command,
Thou shakest in thy little hand
The coral rattle with its silver bells,
Making a merry tune.

—*Longfellow.*

There is none,
In all this cold and hollow world no fount
Of deep, strong, deathless love, save that within
A mother's heart!

—*Hemans.*

DURING the scene that transpired at Baltimore, Mr. and Mrs. Garton Olway were with the Radcliffes in New York. It was so near the beginning of March that Mrs. Olway was about ready to return home, and Garton decided to wait until they could all go together. Meanwhile the Radcliffes gave their friends as much time as they consistently could.

"I do not wonder that you are so absorbed," Garton said one night to Ernest, as the two turned toward home, after a meeting. "It must give great satisfaction to be able to hold the attention of so many different classes of individuals, and to sway them as you do. It is like a magician ruling his little world."

Before he had scarcely paused, Ernest replied with a sigh as of a spent warrior:

"Oh, but the responsibility! Garton, do you know, all those souls weigh me down like so much lead, aye worse, for they seem suspended from my very heart. Then too, there is the danger of misusing my power;" he went on as if rehearsing an argument made long ago; "turning the positive good into positive evil."

"Never fear. Ernest, I never saw such whole-souled humility."

Ernest Radcliffe, indeed, was overworked, and at such times as these, when the immediate strain was removed, he would sink into the depths of discouragement; but this was only momentary, for soon his marvelous elasticity and optimistic faith helped him to rebound again into the courageous, magnetic conqueror.

Eunice Radcliffe did not attend the services every evening now, as it had proved too taxing for her strength; but she always sang when there. And when Garton heard her and looked into the faces of the mixed multitude at her feet, he thought:

"She has more glory here than she would have had as the greatest *prima donna* of the world." He could not keep back the tears any more easily than his mother, who sat by his side. As the music ceased, he whispered to her:

"Eunice has a wonderful gift."

"Yes, Garton; and it is all consecrated to the Highest."

The words came to him like a gentle reproach. Had he disappointed the mother whom he adored? Was it a sorrow to her because he had not reached

the height that Eunice had attained? He never forgot those words nor his mother's look, and ever after they sounded as an undertone whenever he heard Eunice sing.

The children were charmed with New York City, and Dora declared that she would like always to live with Aunt Eunice, and have poor folks come to her for something to eat. She also enjoyed talking with Celia Parkes about the time when as a little child she had found her, and Celia never tired of the tale. Indeed, the latter loved Dora as if she had been a child of her own, and always thought and spoke of her as "the little dear."

One evening they were all seated about the cheery fireplace in the cosy sitting room. The carpet and furniture were plain and neat; the walls were high and airy; but there was the same indefinable something here that had rendered the "mother's room" so attractive. Eunice Radcliffe had succeeded in putting her own personality into the place, and now with her mother there and the children, Garton received the impression that he was in that other room at his own home.

"Why, how is this, Eunice?" he asked, breaking into a pause in the conversation. "You have mother's room down here. Mother, did you bring it down in your pocket? Are you sure, Lena, it was at home when we left? Someway I had missed it ever since you came away, mother, and now I know the secret of it. You left some of the trappings to deceive us; but you absconded with the real article."

"What does 'abscond' mean?" queried Hollis-

ter, racking his brain for a recollection of such a word.

"It means to run away on the sly."

"Grandma run away on the sly!" he exclaimed, with a puzzled look, as he tried to solve the mystery.

"You ask her," returned his father, as they all laughed.

"You are joking, papa, for grandma would never do anything on the sly; would you, grandma; because it's wrong?"

"No, dear; except to tweak your ear, or something like that," she answered, accompanying the words with an illustration.

Dora was sitting between Aunt Eunice and Celia, and did not catch the drift of these remarks. She was chiefly engaged in telling Celia about "Uncle Richard," and "Washington," interspersing the account with occasional questions directed to Eunice, such as:

"Aren't you sorry Uncle Richard did not come with us? A horrid something kept him, but I guess mamma thinks he really did not want to come, anyway; but I don't believe that, do you? When I asked mamma why, she said he probably would prefer coming alone anyway; but surely he would like to be here when I'm here, and for one I'm very sorry."

Though Dora loved her Uncle Ernest, and was pleased when he took her on his knee, yet there was always a little fear mingled with her admiration. There was only one real knight to Dora—Uncle Richard; and Ernest, moreover, was usually preoccupied, except when he gave himself up to family

life, which his work seldom allowed him to do, for more than a half-hour at a time.

But this was an exceptional occasion; and he came home early, leaving the meeting in charge of his staff, assisted by an extra speaker. It was the last night the family would be together, and Eunice had requested his presence. He came in just as Dora was giving her opinions, and he drew up a chair between the child and Eunice. Resting one arm on the back of his wife's chair, he said:

"What is this, Dora, that troubles you so?"

"That Richard was prevented from coming," Eunice answered, before the child had time to reply.

"I'm sorry he isn't here!" returned Ernest, warmly; "it breaks the circle."

Lena was in terror lest the child should repeat what she herself had said when not aware that Dora was near; and immediately spoke to Ernest.

"Richard is coming on later, and then you must all plan to come up to us and have a grand reunion; musn't they, Garton?"

This started Garton on a theme of persuasion, and the catastrophe was averted. Mrs. Olway had been petting her grandson, but as soon as his Uncle Ernest appeared, Hollister left her unceremoniously to perch upon his knee.

If Dora "worshiped" Richard Winthrop, Hollister "adored" Ernest Radcliffe, according to the statement of the former. Hollister once told his grandmother that when he grew up he wanted to be like "papa and Uncle Ernest mixed."

Sometimes Dora and Hollister discussed the

merits of their respective heroes; and their mother once said, laughingly, that she was tempted to take down a list of the good qualities of each, and inclose the same to Eunice; but she refrained.

Soon the men were talking over the political situation, and all that had been accomplished since Richard Winthrop had been senator.

"Winthrop will go back for another term, will he not?" asked Ernest.

"Oh, I hope so; but he would never stoop, you know, to gain votes, and the enemy is alert. It was a marvel that he was sent at all; but the best element sometimes rules."

And so the evening wore away, all too rapidly for this congenial group; and it came time for the evening hymn and prayer and good-night words. Dora and Hollister had been allowed to sit up that night, so the picture was unbroken to the last.

How happy would be that family circle, where all the dear ones might remain until all could go to rest together; yea, even the little ones! But out of the arms of the young mother the little child which she had pressed to her bosom had gone early to its sleep. And so, amid all the joy, Eunice Radcliffe bowed with an aching heart.

"It is two years since we were all at the Radcliffes', isn't it?" asked Garton, one April day.

"Yes; two years in March," Lena answered. "Why?"

"Well! I think it is about time we encored that reunion up here. What do you think?"

"If you could persuade them to leave," returned

Lena. "Then besides, I want Richard Winthrop with us next time; that is, if he would care to come."

"We will see about that!" said Garton, confidently. "We would also want Vina and James and the baby. Whew! what a gathering."

"You are very fond of gatherings, Garton! I believe I like them separate better, though—especially under certain circumstances."

"Well! I say, let us all hang together, or else hang separately," Garton remarked, in his falsetto voice, as he arose to go down to the city. "I should be willing to see even one of our old friends to dinner—Vina, for instance."

The latter evidently did not hear this humane wish; at least, she had no anticipation of dining with Mr. and Mrs. Olway that day. It did not matter much where she dined. Baby Euna was not concerned about it, and a thing which was of no account to this small personage had very little influence over the course of events at the Blake homestead.

There are powers behind thrones, and there are also thrones behind powers; but here was a spot in which the power and the throne occupied the same seat. Baby Euna was very nearly a year old; but a year of a queen's lifetime is a great deal. Men have been known to fight long and bloody battles for a year's sovereignty, even when it was a very unstable sovereignty at that. To be sure there was the Lady Vina, maid of the queen's bed-chamber; Lady Harriet, maid of honor; and Sir James, lord courtier; but there could be only one prime minister

—the sage and cautious John. Nothing, however, could equal the devotion and affinity between this humble servant and her majesty. Indeed, it hath not been equaled in any monarchy, or in any age. Yet, though these two often sat apart alone, the others must needs be in attendance. Therefore, Vina had no expectation of tasting the Olway turkey that day.

But she seemed happily resigned to her fate, as she sat in a low chair darning and thinking of all that had come into her life. She had not long to think alone, however, for soon the kitchen door swung open, and Harriet Blake entered with her usual happy smile.

"Baby asleep?" she inquired, lowering her voice on the last syllable.

"Yes; and father will keep holding her. I told him it was risky as it was catching; but he was not frightened a bit."

Harriet Blake smiled. Vina had learned that her new mother had a weakness for "liking things said in a funny way," and she determined to be equal to the demand. In fact the new daughter had quite won her right of way to her mother's heart; and largely, it must be confessed, by scattering the salt of humor on the weeds of prejudice. James was happy over the result, although he had not the faintest conception as to what agency had brought it about.

"There is nothing John likes better than to cradle that child," answered the older woman, as she sank in a chair to rest before changing her dress.

It was a pleasant, cheery room where they were

sitting. The large windows allowed the sunlight to stream through in floods, and wander into every corner. Easy-chairs and bright hangings added to the home-like aspect of the room. In the corner stood the cradle, now vacant, in which the father of the present owner had dreamed or slept away a large part of his early life. For a few moments both women were silent, each busy with her own thoughts which were certainly pleasant, for the two faces were softened with a faint, happy smile.

"They have both set out to sea together," remarked Harriet Blake, looking up cheerily. "I begin to hear the roar of the breakers." She had even come to the point of admitting some of John's weaknesses to her daughter, who looked upon them so charitably and merrily.

They both laughed outright.

"It is such a comfort to John," continued his wife, her eyes softening as she bent over her work. "He has not worried any hardly since baby came."

This gentle sovereign had indeed wrought revolutions in the family. From the moment of Euna's accession, Harriet Blake had ceased to criticise her daughter even in her heart, for she always restrained its outward expression. Vina, the mother, felt like an "ancient matron," but James, on the contrary, seemed to grow younger every day since; and John almost literally gave up business; at least he worried no more about "the hired man's pay," or his probable uselessness on the farm. Harriet Blake had not had to unruffle his brow now for a long time.

"I shall almost lose the art for want of practice,"

she had said to herself once; "but good riddance to one lost art! Yet I do miss it; but John is better off now."

"Oh, mother!" Vina began, dropping a sock in the excitement of the moment. "What do you think? I have been wondering if it would not be nice to let the children give an entertainment in the church before long. They are getting restless to do something, and we could charge a little at the door, and use the money for the library books and maps which we need so much."

Vina Blake's wonderful aptitude for amusing children had won her a unanimous election as assistant superintendent of the Sunday-school, and the infant department was given into her hands. With the increased population, the Sunday-school formed no small part of the church; and although Vina insisted on being freed from any duty in the larger school, she gladly accepted the honor, for it was a pleasure to her. James Blake was already superintendent, and they two worked well together in this as in all other duties.

"It would be very nice, I am sure," her mother responded. Even yet she was a trifle annoyed at what seemed to her to be presumption in one so young. "Of course James would help you plan it and make a success. In fact, I am sure it would take well."

"I will tell you what I had thought of, mother." But as she saw a certain expression cross the other's face, Vina was almost sorry she had opened the subject, but she bit her lips a little and went on. "Perhaps you may not care to hear, as we have

not yet completed it; but James approves of the plan."

At this show of humility, Harriet Blake's face became natural, and she said, with increased interest, and with a certain tenderness intended to atone for her momentary coolness.

"Oh, yes; tell me your plan."

"Well," returned Vina, pleasantly; "I have written a harmless little thing that will give almost all the children something to do or repeat. James says it is bright, and he thinks it will be just the thing; I made it somewhat instructive too."

"Indeed! When did you write it?

"Oh, since baby came," answered Vina, carelessly.

"I should like to hear it."

"If you like then, I will read it to you all this evening. James wanted me to last night."

Before this, Vina had written several short stories for the children—some she had created; others she had produced by combining her old nursery tales. Already she was looked upon in Milston as quite an author. James Blake's heart often swelled with pride, as a neighbor spoke of "your smart wife." Once when Mrs. Doty was calling, she said to Vina:

"Say, Mrs. Blake, how do you make those stories of yours anyway—making them all join together so well?" Pete says, 'You ask her next time you see her,'" she chuckled, blithely. "He was just teasing me, but I don't care; I really want to know."

"Oh," returned Vina, with a twinkle of mischief

in her eye; "I just let it flow out and hang together as it will, till the thing is all spun, and then afterward I slip in the whalebones."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mrs. Doty, when she recovered from her astonishment.

After she had gotten home, and made her confession, she told Peter that "Young Mrs. Blake could not be excelled in spinning out yarns, but I for one cannot understand such literary folks."

Presently the baby awoke, and they heard John trying to pacify her.

"Bye, bye," he sang, in his husky voice.

It made the two women smile again.

Vina put aside her mending and tripped into "the baby's room," but great, shaggy John did not intend to give up his prize immediately. Vina gave her baby a hug, and Euna began to cry a little; but the child was very good-natured, and was quite willing to stay where she could run her fingers through the beard under grandpa's chin, and be rocked at the same time. The mother wanted to hold out her hands for the child, but she knew what a disappointment it would be to "grandpa," and she was learning to think of others first.

When Vina came back without the child, Harriet Blake's heart softened more than ever.

"If I did have to give up James at last, I had him a long time. It is hard to have to share one's baby so much," she thought, but Vina still looked content. Harriet Blake felt a sense of shame.

Just then a one-seated gig rolled up and Vina hurried to the door and out to the barn to see her husband.

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"Her compensation!" thought Harriet, as the light figure darted down the doorsteps. Then she went to the nursery.

"I declare, John Blake, you are a regular old 'spooney'!" she exclaimed, as she set about her old task of soothing down his "upstart" locks.

"I suppose you are right," he responded, looking up happily.

"I see I shall have to brighten up a little, when you are 'renewing your youth' like this," she added.

He looked mystified.

"I guess I will change my dress right away, before supper." She gave an energetic turn. "By the way, John, it is baby's birthday to-morrow. We ought to celebrate!"

"Sure!" John Blake responded, with new animation.

"If you won't tell, John, I will tell you a secret." The promise was readily given.

She whispered in his ear: "The Milston folks are going to give them a surprise party to-morrow, in honor of the occasion I knew I never could get you to put on your best clothes unless I told you." She laughed jocularly.

He was about to reply when his wife put her finger upon his lips. James and Vina had opened the kitchen door and were coming in, arm in arm as usual, to see "the baby."

"There is a splendid letter from Mr. Radcliffe, mother," said James, holding it out to her; "and Vina has one from Celia. They are doing more work than ever! Really, mother, I do not see how

he stands it. He has a fine constitution, to be sure, but even that won't endure everything. I am afraid he will break down some day."

"Oh, James, it is only because you are a doctor, I do believe that is getting to be the first thing you think of when you look at a person," interrupted Vina, looking up from her letter. "How about baby's constitution to-day, eh, Dr. Blake?"

James smiled, and lifted baby to the ceiling.

"Baby is always perfect in every way, of course," he replied.

Whatever else may be said about it, Ernest Radcliffe's mission was assuming gigantic proportions, and the work was daily growing; but, although there were workers, there was not yet sufficient money. Numerous gifts from many quarters had been consecrated to the cause, but still "more money" was the plea.

When Garton Olway realized the need, he made a liberal donation, and urged a few friends to follow his example. Even Dora and Hollister had their own collection boxes, into which they could put as much as they chose of their weekly allowance of spending money. Lena encouraged the children to give liberally, although she did not yet feel it her duty to give anything in her own name.

"Garton is generous enough for two," she would say.

James and Vina Blake also had caught the infection, and often received fresh stimulus through Celia's letters. So that Ernest Radcliffe came to feel that they had a force behind them at home, and the thought brought comfort and strength and glad-

ness. Richard Winthrop had always helped them and now the others were awakening. There was a season of thanksgiving in the mission home, when the truth became apparent.

"Our prayers are being answered on every hand," said Eunice, gladly. "It is beginning to be glorious!"

In such moments of exaltation, Eunice believed that she could do anything or endure anything for the sake of Christ.

"I gave all to thee," she said one day, "and thou hast shown me that duty is a glorious privilege. There is no burden but has wings and bears me up —up closer to thyself! So let me joy to bear the yoke with thee, whatever it may be, if it but draw me closer to thy breast."

Such was Eunice Radcliffe's secret prayer, a few nights after "the Milston folks" had given the surprise party in honor of her namesake, Euna. But she little dreamed through what an ordeal the answer would lead her.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN INTERVIEW.

What do we live for if not to make life less difficult to each other.

—*George Eliot.*

RICHARD WINTHROP returned to Washington with a lighter heart; and Fredonia was greatly relieved at meeting his genial face in the hall.

"I am so glad you have come."

The very words that another woman had used only yesterday. Fredonia looked expectant.

"It is all right," he said. "She is married to an English gentleman, who is an admirable character, but not wealthy. What she wanted of me was that I would try to influence her uncle to change his mind. He has disinherited her."

"O—h!" Fredonia murmured, astonished and delighted. "Was that all?"

"That was all," Richard answered, smiling and leading the way to the library. Although Fredonia's curiosity led her to question him farther, he put no romantic coloring upon the incident. Indeed, he refused to give it any coloring at all, but dismissed the subject, and rising, said he must devote himself to business.

Those were full days that followed. There was

plenty of work, and excitement as well; for Richard felt very uncertain as to his office, until the vote had been declared, and he had entered upon the duties of his second term as senator.

Thus it was nearly three weeks before his promise occured to him. But he immediately made inquiries as to Monsieur Lasée's arrival, and discovered that he had been in the city several days.

The Frenchman was delighted to see the senator again; and not until there had been a good many questions on the part of the former, and replies from him, could Richard Winthrop broach the subject.

"Your niece has already returned to France?" he asked, with rising inflection.

"No!" was the laconic reply, as a shade of displeasure crossed his face.

"Has she become enamored of our fair country, and decided to travel farther? or perhaps she did not care to return to Washington to leave so soon again, as you say you must." Richard Winthrop wished to ascertain the feelings of the uncle before he made known his errand.

Monsieur Lasée glanced keenly at his questioner, and replied:

"Are you as interested as that, Monsieur Winthrop? My niece is a little goose! She has done the unpardonable, and I have nothing more to do with her." There was a tone in his utterance that boded ill for Mr. Winthrop's proposal.

"Have you parted from your niece in whom you took such pride only a few months ago?"

"This is kind of you, Monsieur Winthrop. I

see she has beset you to endeavor to reinstate her in my good graces; she is shrewd—she knew you could do it, if any one; but I tell you frankly, monsieur, it is impossible. I have firmly made up my mind. She has written you?" he asked, after a moment, looking curiously at his caller.

Richard Winthrop bowed assent.

"Monsieur Lasée, a noble Englishman—and I have reason to believe him such—will make a far worthier husband for your niece than a heartless millionaire of whatever nationality."

"That may be, Monsieur Winthrop; but as she has that, she must abide by the worthy husband, without the other adornments. If she was so willing to disregard my wishes, she must be just as willing to renounce my fortune. I did not make her my heiress that she might spend my money upon a penniless man—or a shiftless one. For no one would have left a prosperous business in the hands of employees to run after a woman, if there was not a screw loose somewhere. I tell you it is all nonsense. Besides—and this proves the imprudence of the thing—she knew that I expressly forbade her marrying him. But women are all alike. I might have known she would prove a traitress." Monsieur Lasée spoke with polite heat. He himself was a bachelor.

"Yet, Monsieur Lasée, she loves this man, and love, you know, is obstinate. Have you taken that into consideration? May I ask," the senator continued with sympathy, "what sort of a man you wished her to marry."

Monsieur Lasée would certainly have taken such

a question from no other man. He hesitated a moment before replying:

"A man with money, or position, or both. She has had plenty of offers of one kind or another." After a short pause, he added: "Monsieur Winthrop, there was one man who had both these; in short, all the desirable qualities, and she appeared to prefer him; but you see how it has turned out. What I cannot understand is—you will pardon me—how you, who were not interested before, should now so suddenly become so. Did you admire her after all?"

"To be frank, I admire her as the wife of that Englishman more than I ever did before," was the reply. "I consider it an excellent union. But I came to intercede for your blessing upon it, however, because I feel in a way responsible for it."

"You responsible for that marriage!" the Frenchman exclaimed, in astonishment.

"Your niece attributes this choice to the influence I exerted over her; for the greatest part unconscious, but none the less powerful—and it may be so; for it accords with my opinion. She did right in marrying her constant lover—the Englishman. So I beg you will not blame your niece for what I am, in a measure, responsible. On this ground, if on no other, I hope you will reconsider the step you have taken, and at least give her your benediction." He was rising as he spoke.

The Frenchman rose also. "With all your honors and eloquence, you are a strange man. Pardon me! I mean it in compliment. But mark my words, that niece of mine has been deceiving

you. You trust her too much. I am older, and I know women better."

As he left the rich old man, Richard Winthrop felt that his call had not been altogether in vain; because he had at least left a more thoughtful face than the one that had greeted him an hour before.

He met Monsieur Lasée once after this, as he was passing the carriage where the old man sat waiting.

"You could persuade me if any one could," Monsieur Lasée told him, and then smiled and shook his head with an experienced incredulity.

That night Richard Winthrop went home musing:

"Disappointed of love—not in love. Had it been any one else—if it could have been any other—I might be the same to-day. It might have hardened me and made me a cynic." As his thoughts ran on the pity deepened in his face, then changed to calm gladness; but at last there was the same old stifled yearning in his heart.

Mrs. Morange was unusually tender toward her brother that night, and a childish eagerness appeared in her face, as she met him on the way to the library.

"What! no engagements this evening, Fredonia?" Richard asked, rather pleased.

"Why, no; how could I go without my escort? Robert is more thoughtless than ever since you came to live with us, and he always forgets when you are away or busy."

A troubled look came into Richard Winthrop's eyes; and as Fredonia could not endure that, she added, gayly:

"No, no, Richard; I have not cared to go out lately. Some way, society has lost its charm when you are not there."

Richard leaned over and took her hand into his warm pressure.

After a short silence, during which they entered the library, Fredonia remarked:

"Miss Van Amburg called to-day. She is about to leave for Europe; I think she goes very suddenly." As she spoke, she watched her brother closely, as he crossed the room.

He expressed some surprise, but with apparent indifference.

"Why, Richard; I thought you might feel some regret over it; she is such a brilliant woman."

"Oh!" he returned; "we must not be too grasping. Let them have a brilliant woman on the other side of the water once in a while. We can spare her, can we not?"

Fredonia could not restrain the question any longer. "Dear Richard, won't you please tell me? Do you ever intend to marry?" She had come across the room, and now stood before him, her hands clasped, with an earnest look upon her face.

He did not jest with her, but saw in a moment what he had never before noted. "How blind I have been! She has been worrying about that all this time," he thought.

"No, Fredonia, I shall always stay with you." Still there was a certain sadness in his eyes, although he smiled.

Her face lighted up as if a ray of sunlight had burst upon her; but she said, more soberly again:

"Richard, do you not care to marry?"

"No, sister, I have no desire in that line. I have fully decided."

Fredonia felt that she had distressed him needlessly for her selfish gratification, and came nearer, and softly stroked his forehead. Then pressing her lips to his brow, she said: "Richard, if I could only make up for your loss!"

He pressed her hand in silent acknowledgment of her sympathy, but could not utter a word. Yet there, in the solemn twilight, their hearts were knit in a closer bond, and Fredonia knew that her surmises had been correct.

After a while she whispered:

"You have become so dear to me that I could not bear to think of you ever leaving me. You have come like sunshine into my barren life. You have brought all the real happiness I have known." She sobbed quietly.

"Fredonia, may God be praised. If I have helped to make your life happier, it is worth all that I have missed. I see now that it is in every way providential."

"Yes, it is indeed," she replied, drying her tears; "and Richard I am very thankful to our God."

The brother and sister had entered into their fellowship of suffering. But neither knew the depths of pain that lay hid in the other's heart. Richard did not know what a vague emptiness had yawned in Fredonia's life, through which her emotional nature had been weakened and her will enervated, until he came to fill up the void, and to teach her the fullness of love, which wells up in a life like

his. She, on the other hand, could not conceive of the devotion, which though still bowed at the feet of an earthly ideal, was overshadowed by the loftier Christ-love that yearned for fellowship with all the good and true, and longed to bring all others into that fellowship. Fredonia knew that there must be suffering, but did not dream of the temptations that sometimes beset this externally calm man, who seemed to her a breathing statue, sculptured by a master-hand.

As she sat silently, Robert Morange entered the room :

"Well, well, Winthrop! are you coming back to society again soon? The women are all pining for you, and will not be comforted. The fair daughters of Israel are going into mourning soon, if you do not return." Robert Morange seemed to delight in the former's look of disgust, and he proceeded with more animation : "Let me see, Mademoiselle Lasée did not return to Washington with her uncle?"

Fredonia could see that her husband was drawing pretty near the danger line ; but she could only remain coldly dignified. Then Mr. Morange changed his voice to express mock concern.

"I hope you two did not have a misunderstanding."

Richard Winthrop suddenly arose to his feet: "Robert," he exclaimed, with righteous indignation gleaming from his eyes, but in an attitude of regal self-command, "*we* two have a misunderstanding, and I demand from you an explanation!"

Robert Morange was amazed, but at the same time filled with admiration. He had often before

spoken tauntingly of Richard Winthrop's favor among the women; but never had evoked anything more fiery than mild disdaim. Mr. Morange was no coward, but his southern impetuosity was neutralized by his northern moderation, and he simply stood in silent wonder.

After a pause, which seemed an age to Fredonia, Robert Morange assumed an easy smile and said:

"You would do for the Black Prince now, Winthrop. You never looked better."

By this time the other's anger had cooled, and he walked to the window and glanced out.

"I did not mean anything, Winthrop—except, as every man knows who is not as blind as a bat, that the French heiress was, to speak politely, impressed in your favor.

Richard Winthrop turned toward him with a look of pardon and mild forbearance.

"I did not know you concealed such a fire, man. Come, come! you take things so seriously. But you know all I live for is justice and amusement," Mr. Morange said with a laugh, and added to himself that Winthrop's high notions were puerile; but he did not even pretend that he himself had not the highest respect for his brother-in-law. And now he was forced to admit that he felt somewhat ill at ease, as if Richard Winthrop's presence were a silent indictment upon his character.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FINAL STRUGGLE.

Why comes temptation but for man to meet
And master, and make crouch beneath his foot,
And so be pedestaled in triumph.
—*Browning, "The Ring and the Book."*

NEARLY two years had passed, and Richard Winthrop sat in the drawing room of Garton Olway's residence on Elmwood Street. If attention can make any mortal happy, he ought to have been superlatively happy. For opposite him sat Lena, engrossed with every word; near her, reclined Garton, with his approving smile and frequent ejaculation; on one arm of the visitor's chair was perched Dora, now a mature young woman of fourteen, but not too shy to rest her hand on Uncle Richard's shoulder and to allow his arm to encircle her waist as a safeguard against falling; Hollister, a lad of ten years, occupied a high stool directly in front; while on the lap of this very welcome guest was little Merwin, the baby of two happy summers.

If Dora did not literally strew her hero's way with flowers, she did what was better—gave herself, a little wild-briar rose to be worn in his buttonhole.

"Oh, Uncle Richard! I wish you would take me back with you to Washington."

"Humph! Dody, you *would* make a nice sena-

tor's wife, wouldn't you? What would you know about government?" said Hollister.

They all laughed, and Dora looked a little ashamed.

"Hollister, you know I don't want to be a senator's wife; I just——"

"No, you expected to be a president's wife, I suppose," said this tease of a brother.

"That is a worthy ambition, my son," remarked Garton, with a paternal air, but controlling his amusement with difficulty. "Dora knows how much good she could do in such a position, and I hope she may fill one as responsible some day."

"Dody thinks she could rule then, papa, that's what takes her, but she couldn't a bit; could she, Uncle Richard?"

"Dora can rule anywhere," declared Uncle Richard, as the expectant little face awaited his verdict. "Dora is a little queen; but she is going to be the best little queen in the world," he added, confidently; "she is going to put the president and us senators to open shame."

This was a side issue in the more general conversation. Lena asked about Mrs. Morange and Washington society, and Garton listened, interpolating a remark now and then. Finally they spoke of Ernest Radcliffe's work, and Garton said:

"You know what wonderful results they are having there? How strangely it turned out about the woman who brought Dora home, you remember? To think that she was Vina's sister. And what she has been, and then what she is now. There are strange things in this world."

"Oh, papa," corrected Dora; "Celia did not bring me, you know; I brought her."

"Yes, dear; I suppose your childish love saved her. It would seem as though it was all providential."

"I have no doubt of it," said Richard.

"You remember Vina?" asked Lena. "You ought to see her now. She has turned out so differently from what I once expected. She is a real staid little housekeeper, you know. I do not mean that she has lost her bright, quick ways, nor her liking for nice things entirely; but she has studied for some time, you know, and taught; had a fine position in the high school, until she married a young Dr. Blake. You did not know him, I think? Mother thought a great deal of Vina. When Eunice went away, it was so hard for her, you know. Yes, what I started to say was this; you recollect that drama we impersonated here once?"

"Yes."

"Well, do you believe, Vina has since told me that that night was the crisis of her life. You remember how well she acted, and what praises we showered upon her? It made her wild: she discovered she had a hidden passion for acting, and the thought of doing anything else in life maddened her. She was about determined to run away and go on the stage. But her mother's death and Eunice's love saved her, she said. It was touching to hear her say: 'I could not have been saved if I had gone away, because I had no excuse.'"

Richard Winthrop was greatly impressed by the story.

"We are helping to forge the chains of slavery when we little think it," he said; "yet on the other hand we may be as unconsciously helping to loosen them. The great difference lies in a motive wholly consecrated to the highest service for others. If we pour out all the best we have, as One did, our responsibility will be met."

He seemed to forget himself as he spoke, and had a far-away look in his eyes; but he was soon recalled to the present, however, by baby Merwin, who had suddenly wakened from his nap and was tugging at his watch chain.

Hollister, who had been moving uneasily on his stool, now rose and strutted across the room to the piano.

"Garton, proceed to know thyself," said Richard Winthrop, with an intelligent nod at the boy.

Garton laughed and replied: "I am not nearly so important. Time wears off value even."

"Why don't somebody play?" asked Hollister, with boyish impatience. "If nobody else will, I will! May I?" He remembered his politeness just in time to save himself.

"Let him," Richard Winthrop urged, and he began.

But this presumption was too much for Dora's composure. She slipped down suddenly from the chair-arm.

Oh, Uncle Richard, let me play. Hollis can't play at all,—but I can, Uncle Richard; I have been practising on purpose to play for you."

"You see we are all anxious to entertain royalty," said Garton, gayly.

Hollister yielded gracefully. He only wanted to have something going on, and he could thrum quite as well on the table.

While Dora was playing very creditably, the bell rang, and a moment later a neat maid entered bearing a telegram.

Garton, supposing it was in regard to some business matter, glanced over it hastily, but turned pale and shut his lips with a peculiar expression which came to him whenever agitated.

"What is it?" asked Lena.

Looking up, he said slowly: "Ernest is dangerously ill with typhoid fever."

For several seconds the silence was unbroken.

Hollister was the first to speak: "Uncle Ernest sick! What will Aunt Eunice do?"

That was the practical question to be considered.

"Mother must know," said Lena, softly.

"Yes, dear," Garton replied, rising. "I will tell her now. I must go to New York immediately, so have my grip ready. I can take the evening train. If possible, I shall bring Ernest here—that city is no place for him."

Richard Winthrop had risen too—he had been almost forgotten—and touching Garton's arm, said:

"Garton, I am going with you. I know of a hospital near them, where Ernest can have every care and comfort. The walls are deadened, and he shall have a private room, and nurses, and the best physicians." Richard had not told them that he had established such a hospital.

By the expression on the speaker's face, Garton

knew he was not to be opposed. Lena tried remonstrance, but soon desisted.

"Richard, this is noble," Garton said; and it was all he could say just then.

Mrs. Olway was shocked, but composed.

"I will be ready to accompany you, Garton," she said. "Oh, my poor darling! Her child taken, and now her husband on the brink."

"Not so bad as that, mother," returned Garton, hopefully, putting his arm lovingly around her.

"No, dear, true. I am borrowing trouble."

But Garton himself was very apprehensive.

"When a strong-brained man like Ernest is stricken down with that fever, I shudder," he thought, and involuntarily suited the action to the word.

So it happened that the evening train swiftly bore Richard Winthrop, and Garton Olway and his mother toward New York.

Garton made Mrs. Olway as comfortable as her easy-chair would allow, and then left her, as he knew she preferred, to prayerful silence. He and Richard sat near together but spoke few words. Each was plunged too deeply in his own thoughts to notice the other very much.

Garton was fearful for the worst; and the picture of Eunice's agony, should her husband be taken away, actually stifled his own personal feelings. And personal feelings he had, for Ernest Radcliffe had been a friend since college days, and was doubly dear as a brother. Moreover, Garton was troubled by the question which had come to him when little Olway died.

"Why is it? How can it be that God permits such sorrows to come upon those who are most consecrated—most saintly. Eunice had been a perfect angel—nay more. She is human, and has fought and conquered temptation; but she has always lived for others, it seems. And Ernest too; I never saw such heroic sacrifice—and in the service of their God. Why do these things come to them, and not to—well, me, for instance, who deserve nothing better."

After a while the answer foreshadowed itself. He had felt it, but would not entertain it hitherto:

"Whom I love, I chasten—perfect through suffering. Must a price be paid, when one has already paid the price? Partaker of his suffering! Yes! Well—would I be ready to suffer, if need be, to be made perfect?"

Being unable to answer the question satisfactorily, he again reviewed the immediate prospect. Then his thoughts turned to Richard Winthrop.

"He is being made perfect through suffering—and now he goes to minister to his rival's needs, and with such a generous hand. It is strange! These two men whom I knew so well—both so grand and so different withal—and the destiny of each so closely connected with her! Little would I have thought it—but I know not which is the more worthy of her."

The imperfections of these two men were all forgotten in Garton's sympathy and love. He knew that they were not perfect, but were men like himself; yet he glorified them in his thoughts, and by so doing, though he knew it not, he glorified himself.

The thoughts that surged through Richard Winthrop's brain were not so easily traceable. They crossed and re-crossed one another, until he could scarcely tell whence each sprang; and this very uncertainty was an added source of pain. For his desires seemed to rise up before him, and to rapidly transform themselves as they passed before his inward vision, without his least control. He had indeed one consolation—he knew that the prompting motive of all had been pure. It had been untainted by any personal thought or wish. His friend was sick—nay, at the point of death perhaps, and he was eager to do his uttermost for this friend's comfort and recovery. This was the first thought. But then he thought of the anguish of the wife—the woman whom he, Richard Winthrop, had adored, and had looked upon as one who could not be smitten by earthly sorrows; for he had the same old feeling of his youth, that sorrow was a positive evil, though he now believed it was permitted by a loving Father. But that such sorrow should fall upon her! She might lie wounded and bleeding, and he could not comfort her.

But as he now went on thinking, new complications arose. Ah! an evil thought knocked for entrance—a horrible, ghostly thought panting to become a desire; but he drove it back. Then it hovered like an angel of light, radiantly beautiful—so tempting that he swooned in imagination, and could hardly restrain himself from bowing at its feet.

Shall it be put in words? Richard Winthrop did not allow it to formulate itself. He closed his eyes and threw himself on his face, so to speak, in prayer

and anguish of condemnation; and there he fought the invisible Apollyon all that wearisome night, as they plunged along in the darkness. He wrestled, as did the patriarch long ago by the brookside, praying to be freed from this temptation or be made proof against its allurements, and would not let the angel go until he had gained the victory. And no doubt, from that time in heaven, he was known by another name—for this was the crucial hour of his life.

It was nearly eight o'clock the next morning when three figures alighted from a carriage in front of a dwelling in a poor quarter of the metropolitan city. Eunice Radcliffe met them at the door. She was wan, but composed; and Richard Winthrop noted a certain subdued look which was to him a sign of crushing grief. In fact he always seemed to read thoughts and feelings more clearly than other men.

"We have done all we can," Eunice said, after silently embracing her mother and Garton, and giving her hand mechanically to Richard Winthrop. Nothing seemed to surprise her—and for some reason she felt it to be perfectly natural that he should be there. "All the people have been very kind, and Celia has done wonderfully. Oh, God has not entirely forsaken us!" With this she burst into tears, the first emotion she had exhibited since her husband's illness. Now that she had given way, it had to spend itself in full force.

Richard Winthrop silently thanked God that tears had come to her relief, for her first look had made him sick at heart.

They found Ernest delirious, and Richard, who had ordered the carriage to wait, begged Garton to remain while he went in search of physicians to make arrangements for the invalid's removal to the hospital, if the doctors should advise it. Garton complied as Richard put the request in such a reasonable light.

A council of the best physicians was called, and they advised the removal, as every convenience for treatment would be secured by the change, and no real risk need be taken with the skilled management to which the process of transportation was subject.

Thus before night Ernest Radcliffe — the real Ernest being unconscious—lay in a luxurious bed in a room of equable temperature, secure from all disturbing noises and ministered to by the skilled nurses and experienced physicians.

At first Eunice wished to sit by the bedside, hoping vainly by her loving touch to charm away the fever from her husband's brow, until finally the physicians insisted upon her retiring.

Those were terrible days! The fever must run its course, and the crisis was yet to be passed.

There are prayers which are an agony. The "Garden" scene in a measure is enacting every day. "Let this cup pass from me!" was Eunice Radcliffe's faint whisper. But it was only at the last that she could add: "Yet not my will, but thine be done!"

When little Winthrop died, the sorrow had eaten into the very heart; but then Ernest too had suffered, and their fellowship of suffering had glorified the pain, and drawn them closer together until the

breach was almost filled. But now—ah! there was nothing but an empty anguish—an aching void within and around her. God himself, for the first time in her life, seemed to be shut away from her. He seemed far from her, and she could not reach him, and she cried out in her agony, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" And then, she knew not how it was, but the Comforter came, and he was in the form of the Crucified, and she was at peace.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ONLY GREATER.

The regal soul hath not her habitation
On cloudless hills with dreamers light and vain,
But low amid the valleys of temptation
She kneels to soothe a fallen sister's pain.
—*Frank Walcott Hutt.*

"IT has passed. He will recover." These were the balm-laden words that fell from the lips of the attending physician.

They came like a reprieve at the gallows. The fearful tension was relaxed—and Eunice was free to weep for joy. Every heart praised God: and audible accents fell from Richard Winthrop's lips.

"Oh, Richard!" Eunice said (she so addressed him for the first time); "how can we ever thank you? Accept what we can never express," she added, rising and laying her clasped hands on his arm. "You have been a brother indeed, like Him who sticketh closer than a brother. He will bless you, and he," she continued, glancing toward the sick-room, "will thank you as I never can; for he has been very close to the heavenly gate, and his words will have a sweeter benediction."

Richard Winthrop could not endure this strain of emotion, nor did he think it wise that Eunice should prolong it; so he said, that as the danger was now over, he must return immediately to Wash-

ington. Then bidding them all a hasty farewell, amid entreaties that he would wait, and promising Garton to complete his visit with him in the near future, he departed.

But it was some time before he took the train for the capital. He felt that he could not yet trust himself anywhere. The whole world seemed to him to have undergone a revolution ; nothing looked the same to him. He felt like an old man, whose years, accumulated in unconsciousness, had suddenly fallen upon him with such ponderous force and volume as to make him stagger under the untimely load.

He wandered through the streets of the city,— weary, forlorn, spent with struggling, and yet battling for a complete victory. He was amazed, nay, indeed horrified at the possibilities of his weakness in temptation. Hitherto he had felt quite secure. His one great disappointment had almost come to be his most sacred treasure, which he had enshrined in the innermost temple of his heart ; and at last, he had gotten a sort of secret pleasure from its presence, like enjoying the fragrance of crushed flowers. Resigned, as he thought, to his alloted fate, he felt a degree of complacency as he reflected upon what appeared to be his crucifixion of self.

That the possibility would occur of his ever again having the opportunity to think of Eunice as free, he had never dreamed. His renunciation had been final ; he had never stopped to consider what he would do or hope, should such a time arise. But when the time did come, so unexpectedly, he was astonished to find how intensely he yet longed for

this one thing; he was amazed that cruel thoughts could arise in his heart, and struggle to be wishes; he was crushed and humbled to the dust.

To be sure he had been conqueror all through, but he had to fight every inch of the ground; and even now he felt that the enemy was lurking near. Out in the busy throng that jostled itself on Broadway, Richard Winthrop crossed his Delaware, and had his Valley Forge; but for him a Trenton followed, and he bravely pressed the lingering warfare on to the victorious end.

As he took the train for Washington, there was a deep calm in his eyes, and a peaceful joy in his heart, the equal of which he had never before experienced. Now he could truly and meekly say:

"'I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'"

"Why, Richard, how happy you look," exclaimed Fredonia, as he walked into the library at Washington, the next day; "has anything happened?"

"Yes, sister; a great deal has happened. A friend of mine who has been at death's door, will recover now. Should I not be rejoiced?"

"Yes, of course," replied Fredonia; "but you do it in such a rapt, exalted sort of way. I thought you had just descended from the seventh heaven when you came in. But who is it?" Fredonia sometimes spoke lightly in this way, but always checked herself when she saw, as she did now, that it pained her brother.

"Ernest Radcliffe," Richard answered, with such tender gladness in his face that Fredonia hardly

knew which surprised her the more: the startling news, or her brother's behavior.

She simply gazed at him in silence; and he, knowing all that was passing in her mind, of sympathy and wonder, came nearer, and sat by her side. But his face was radiant.

"Rejoice with me, my sister; for there is a great cause for joy. The love of Christ is passing wonderful. Oh, I have but tasted it, sister! Come drink of it with me, and all our selfish love with its troubles and joys even will be as nothing when weighed in the balance with his wonderful love!"

She leaned her head upon his shoulder, and wept in silence. After a long time of speechless communion, Richard said, with a tone of affection, half brother's, half lover's: "I thank God we can be so much to each other."

"Ernest," said Eunice Radcliffe, one day when he had become thoroughly convalescent, and was lying back in the reclining-chair, while his wife sat by his side and stroked his shapely hand, now so white and thin: "isn't it wonderful how much we owe to Richard?"

He already knew how Richard Winthrop's thoughtfulness had provided for his comfort, and he felt that, as indeed the physicians said, he owed his life to the care and quiet which the hospital had afforded. His face lighted up and a new animation came into his voice as he replied:

"I can never thank him for what he has done for us from the very beginning; but then, thanks are superfluous, Eunice. We must show him how

much we love him, in all the tenderest, most delicate ways we know of,—and what could I say more?" Then, after a short pause: "Richard is the most Christ-like soul I know. His consecration is most like a woman's consecration of any I have ever seen from a man."

Since the restoration of her husband Eunice Radcliffe had time for deep and serious reflection. The joy did not surge back into her heart for naught. The relief from her awful agony only made more clear to her mind the anguish of renunciation; and, as she dwelt upon her past life, and its connection with those she loved, the thought of Richard Winthrop instinctively clung to her and would not depart. "Can it be possible?" she asked herself over and over again, as the truth dawned upon her. "Can it be possible that Richard did care for me at one time?" The thought silenced her, as little things were recalled one by one to confirm her suspicion. She remembered the time he had called upon her and how strangely it had ended: her conflicting feelings of regret and hope along with the conviction that she had followed the Divine leading.

"Has he suffered like that?" she murmured, as her own sorrow rose before her. Then she caught a glimpse of how he must have struggled, if he loved her still. She could not—would not endure the thought.

"O God! O Christ! If this be true—sustain and comfort him, and give him better, higher joy than any earth can afford. Oh! Why must I be the cause of sorrow?"

After this a voice within her seemed to say:

"The sorrow shall be turned into joy. It is the sorrow that is leading him to the joy." And this thought intuitively connected itself with the time when they had spoken so intimately with each other.

"Oh, I have been so blind all along. Yet would I wish it otherwise? O God! I thank thee for all—though I deserve nothing."

She buried her face in her hands, only saying at last:

"'He worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. It is all right. It could never have been—but God knows I feel unworthy of my happiness."

As the truth grew clearer day by day, Eunice prayed:

"Show me what I can do now. Let me be the medium of a great blessing to him. Help us impart our happiness—not keeping it selfishly to ourselves. Thou, O God, art purifying our love through suffering that it may merge into the love of Christ for all."

Then there came to her mind Lowell's beautiful sonnet, beginning:

> I would not have this perfect love of ours
> Grow from a single root, a single stem.

And more fully than ever she entered into the thought of the lines:

> That love for One from which there doth not spring
> Wide love for all—is but a worthless thing.

Eunice Radcliffe had always loved these sonnets

of Lowell's; indeed some of them had become a very part of herself. But she now felt, in the light of the past and with the outlook into the future, that the love of Christ in man is the one great force by which he can elevate his fellow-men; that all else is but a scintillating fragment of the white light of universal love.

Thus, as they sat together, Ernest and Eunice would often plan how they might best show their gratitude and love.

After a time, Ernest's strength came back again, in fuller measure than ever. His energy seemed to have been quadrupled during his enforced quiet, but the load was gone from his heart.

"It taught me that the Lord had no special need of me. I see now that it was wrong to worry, and think that the whole world was upon my shoulders, as I sometimes did, you know, dear," Ernest said on one occasion to Eunice. "Right at the time when it seemed so necessary that I should be everywhere, he laid me aside for a while to learn that his power and resources were endless—inexhaustible. I shall never unduly worry again; for it is all in his hands. It is as though he let us play at work for our own good; and when we can do no more, he turns our failures into glorious achievements by a touch of his own finger."

Meanwhile Celia Parkes had passed from a sense of her uselessness in the world to a realization that God could use even the "broken vessel" for his honor and glory. For she had been the mainstay of the mission during the trying days of Ernest Radcliffe's illness.

The horror, which once hung suspended above her head, as it were like Damocles' sword, now was only a phantom, for her enemy had been brought to justice, and escaped death only by commutation of his sentence. Yet often as she awoke at night she would hear his threat ringing in her ears: "I will scale the walls yet!"

But she still prayed and hoped for him—though she never visited his cell,—and there was no second request for her.

There finally came a time when the Radcliffes felt that they might show their love to Richard, in a peculiar way. A second son was born to them—and they called him Richard Winthrop. They also made sacred the name of little Olway by adopting a native child of India, and taking upon themselves his entire support. He was given the name of Olway Radcliffe, and was educated in America, for a missionary to his own country.

Indeed since Ernest Radcliffe's recovery, their interest in all, and especially foreign mission work, had increased; they were never called to go to the foreign field; but they interested others therein, and sought to multiply centers of influence.

"The cities of America must first be taken," was Ernest Radcliffe's constant battle-cry.

The delicate honor shown to Richard Winthrop on the part of his sister, in the naming of her son, touched Garton with a feeling of peculiar pleasure. As soon as he appreciated the fact, he went to his mother's room, to pour out his convictions.

"Mother, do you realize that Richard Winthrop is the ideal Christian hero.

Mrs. Olway looked at him with some surprise. "Did you say Richard, Garton? I should hardly think you could put any one there but Ernest."

"Ah, but, mother, you do not know all, and now I can no longer keep it to myself. Eunice did right in naming their son for Richard, for Richard has loved her all these years, and you know he has never married. But the disappointment has made a hero of him. Know this, mother, that he would suffer more to the extent that he is more tender and sensitive than other men. Lena thought it would kill him; but I never saw such self-mastery."

This was presenting Richard Winthrop in an entirely new light to Mrs. Olway. She had admired him as an incorruptible public man, and had been surprised and gratified to learn of his generosity toward benevolence, and his interest in Ernest's work; but she had never seen the real man. She only said in reply to Garton:

"Why, Garton, are you sure? Is it really true?"

Mrs. Olway was the kind of a woman to appreciate such a situation.

"Yes; I am perfectly sure—since Ernest's sickness."

"Well, Garton," his mother said, after a while, "if Eunice had not been just what she was, the result might have been very different. The fate of others was connected with her own, although she did not know it; but she gave her best to others, and by so doing, averted evil that we cannot estimate. She will some time know what that simple fidelity to duty has wrought of good, and prevented of evil. It ought to be a good lesson to us, Garton,

for if any one had asked me what would have been the effect of such a disappointment upon your friend, I should have said atheism, worldiness, and recklessness."

"Yes, mother; but you wonld have been wrong; Richard had the true metal in him."

"True, my son; but it needed the magnet to separate it from the rubbish." And the words greatly impressed him.

"If that is so, our responsibility is a terrible reality," he thought; and then his sister's life came before him, and with that the story of Celia and Vina Parkes. "Eunice, I know, received the idea that she was responsible for Vina, and Vina says Eunice saved her from a wrong path; but she does not know; however, Celia,"—and then the latter's own words rang in his ears: "If others knew their duty as these do, what horrors of sin would be prevented"—"well, I do not know; but I shall keep my eyes open hereafter. There are too many already who have eyes and see not." His own eyes moistened with tears, as he thought: "Perhaps it is the influence of mother's life working upon me now." He was lost in the mystery and solemnity of the thought.

After he had poured out his heart to Lena, she too was speechless and serious.

"It makes my life seem light and frivolous," she said, as she drew close to him. "Do you know, Garton, I have cared less for society in the way I used to ever since Richard has been so different? He seemed to change the whole face of society for me, anyway."

"He gets at the core of it, dearie; he pierces through the shell, and lives in society on the inside, so to speak. But I never supposed there was anything but shell myself. Live and learn, wifie. You and I can take a course of study even under our little doubles. Where are they? Is Merwin asleep?"

"Yes; but when did you say Richard is coming again?"

"Oh, before long, he promised. But a senator's time belongs to his country, you know."

The fact of Ernest Radcliffe's illness did not appear to James and Vina in quite the same light as to others. As soon as the news reached them, Dr. Blake said:

"Just as I feared," and he was more than once on the point of going to New York; but Vina read Celia's letters to him, and showed him that Dr. James Blake was not needed there in a professional way, though he was greatly needed in every way in Milston.

Yet these were sad days to both, until the crisis was past. On the night of the good news, the Blakes made a celebration. The neighbors and especial friends of the Radcliffes were invited in and a general "thanksgiving" ensued. Vina read an original poem, setting forth the biography of their former pastor in such a way as to bring tears of sympathy and gladness to the eyes of many. Baby Euna honored the occasion by her name and pretty prattling.

"It is wonderful what an effect those two have had on us all at Milston," Mrs. Blake said after-

ward, when commenting upon the evening's significance. "Mr. Radcliffe's death would have been mourned by all who knew him as if it had been in their own family."

In congratulation upon Ernest Radcliffe's recovery, the "Milston folks" sent a letter with a sum of money for the carrying on of the work in New York. Though the gift was not large, it was prompted by such heartfelt love and sympathy that Ernest said to Eunice:

"I feel like saying—they have given more than all!"

CHAPTER XXV.

AUF WIEDERSEHEN.

Great souls are portions of eternity.

—*Lowell.*

"GOD help us! Can it be?" asked Richard Winthrop, as he hurried out of the senate chamber to the carriage, which had been sent to take him home.

The coachman drove as rapidly as possible down the broad, smooth street that led to Morange Hall.

A soft, spring-like breeze was blowing, and the sky was tender and peaceful. Yet now, the very quietness of nature seemed to Richard Winthrop like the harbinger of death.

As he hurried into the hall, Fredonia met him and went into his open arms, weeping and clinging to him. He said to a man who stood near by:

"Is all over?"

"Yes, sir; master is dead," the servant answered, as a quiver of grief passed over his face. He had been a slave in the family from his birth, and was deeply attached to his master, so much so that he would not leave when he became free.

And now all the servants went about sorrowfully, for Robert Morange had always been kind and generous to them, and they felt that a terrible cloud was resting upon the household. Such devotion

among servants is rare in the North, and is pathetic in the extreme to one who appreciates the Negro's nature.

Now that her husband was dead, Fredonia was well-nigh inconsolable. Her brother's heart sank as he beheld her grief. He began to be alarmed for her health; and indeed, the result was that she was prostrated for several weeks after the shock.

Robert Morange died from a stroke of apoplexy; the great change had come so suddenly, without an opportunity for a parting word or caress, that it increased the anguish of the wife.

Whatever the life of the departed has been, death always brings regret to the living. All the little virtues are magnified by the thought that one has gone out into the mystery of the beyond; and the faults, which seemed so glaring before, are hardly thought of, or at most, are kindly overlooked.

"Oh, that I had been more loving and tender, and less critical!" thought Fredonia, in the anguish of her sorrow.

She did not then stop to consider how often she had tried to show a wifely devotion, and had turned away discouraged at finding no response. No; she rather dwelt on the last few weeks when, she now fancied, a change had come over her husband, scarcely noticed at the time, but a gentleness of manner and more consideration for her brother. These things Fredonia saw now, and felt that she had not responded to them as she might have done.

A few weeks after the funeral, with all its external pomp and show of mourning, which was befitting

the death of a wealthy judge, Richard and Fredonia again sat in their library, in their favorite corner near the open fireplace, and in front of the large bay window overlooking the park. Fredonia was dressed in deep mourning and the crepe at her neck served to give an unusual paleness to her complexion. Surely the woman who occupied the crimson-velvet chair to-day was a very different person from the one who had so often sat there before, bending over her delicate embroidery or some new work of literature. It was as if a beautiful mind had suddenly blossomed into a beautiful soul.

"Sister mine," said Richard, after they had mused for some time in silence; "I have a plan which I think will be just the thing for both of us."

"Have you, Richard? What is it?" There was very little animation, but none of the old listlessness.

"I shall not be re-elected senator—but I have been privately offered the position of foreign minister. What do you say to our accepting it, as it would take us abroad for a time among new scenes and people? We could travel too, if you like. It seems to me to be an excellent idea." He awaited her reply with a good deal of interest.

The thought brought a flush of pleasure to her cheek. She had been abroad only once, and that was before her marriage. Her husband had never cared to travel, offering as an excuse that there were too many inconveniences about it.

"You approve, I see," continued Richard, joyously. "If you would prefer our going as private

individuals, not as a nation's representative, I will decline the proffer."

"No, no, Richard! On the whole I like the other better. Besides you never would be content not to be doing something for your country, and you will make a splendid representative." Fredonia had not appeared so natural since her bereavement. "To what country are you to be sent?"

"To France—*La belle France*—Paris. I have one more surprise for you, Fredonia. Monsieur Lasée did not disinherit his niece after all; but repented at last, and she has written to me that she wishes me to use quite a large sum of money which she has designated for that purpose as I think best for benevolences in America. What do you think of that?"

"Why, Richard, will the heavens fall? And it was all your doing too!"

"No, not quite. I simply set him thinking. I am glad he repented, for his distrust of women was pitiable."

"Do you wonder that he distrusted them?" asked Fredonia, very much after her old manner. Presently she asked: "Where is she now?"

"In London. Her husband added a postscript to her letter. A man wrote a postscript for once, Fredonia!"

"Yes; no doubt to prevent his wife from doing it," she retorted.

Just then a maid brought in letters. There was one from Garton Olway begging for a visit. Among other things it said:

"Do not disappoint us; but come prepared for a

long stay. Escape the lassitude of the southern springtime, and sojourn for a while in the home of your youth."

"Could you go?" asked Fredonia. "I should really enjoy going there again."

"Certainly," Richard replied. "We can take a roundabout route to the steamer, and make them go down and see us off—unless they can be persuaded to cross the ocean with us."

So they accepted the invitation, and remained several weeks; and Fredonia's spirits revived under the early memories and genial friends. They used to take long drives out of the city, and once went as far as Milston and delighted the Blakes with a friendly call, to the envy of their neighbors.

Such an event was a worthy subject of conversation, and Mrs. Doty freely expressed her views.

"I declare, Vinie Parkes fell into very good hands. Who would ever have thought, when she lived here, that she would be having a senator calling on her, with his beautiful sister—and the Olways too."

Harriet Blake had never felt so well satisfied with her son's marriage as on the day of this senatorial visit. Little Euna, of course, immediately fancied Mr. Winthrop, and the admiration proved to be mutual. The name of "Euna" was very suggestive to him, and led him out into a series of speculations as to how much this "bud of promise" was indebted to its namesake for its prospects in life. He determined never to forget the child whose name had such a charm for him; nor did he ever as successive birthdays and holidays proved.

But during the pleasant days together, it was

impossible to persuade Garton to go abroad, though he gladly consented to go to New York.

"We will all see you sail, my friends, though with tears in our eyes; for, while we rejoice in the manner of your going, we shall deeply regret the fact of your absence."

Dora was quite inconsolable over the prospect, and pleaded to be allowed to "go to Paris too"; but Hollister took the charm away from such a plan by remarking:

"Theodora Olway, you couldn't talk a word of French! Wouldn't you have fun, having to pull Uncle Richard's sleeve whenever anybody asked you a question; or else get a scorpion when you asked for an egg. Girls haven't any more sense than——"

As he was at a loss for a comparison, his Uncle Richard suggested "boys" as a possible substitute for the unthinkable.

Thus with pleasantry and sadness intermingled, as they usually are in the texture of this ordinary life, they all went to New York, intending to spend a day at the Radcliffes', and all go from there to the wharf.

It would be impossible to put into words the experience of that farewell reunion. The home scene itself was simple enough; the plain, cheery rooms furnishing the background for the dear familiar forms; the group of faces, sweet or manly; the bright eyes and voices of the children; the kind words, and wishes half-expressed; the verses of Scripture, speaking through Ernest Radcliffe's magnetic tones, and the prayer and the song; all these

were common sights and sounds, but on this one day they stood forth transfigured, as seen through the mystery of inward light that sat on each like a halo. So, at least, thought Richard Winthrop.

The steamer was to sail early the following morning, and the passengers went aboard the afternoon or evening before. Our group of friends wandered over the spacious decks, and looked with interest at the many conveniences for the comfort of the travelers. It was hard to bring themselves to determine to say the good-bye words; but at last, as the shadows began to lengthen over the bay and the sunlight kissed the roofs of the stately buildings good-night, they gathered near the bow of the great ocean "greyhound," farthest from the noise of the city, while with hearts made very tender at the prospect of parting—no one knew for how long, they sang softly and sweetly:

God be with you till we meet again,
Keep love's banner floating o'er you;
Smite death's threat'ning wave before you;
God be with you till we meet again.

THE END.

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